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# Author's Note

**So,**

**The first special edition for my main series.**

**I wonder how this is going to go...**

**I hope you enjoy it >3<**

# Allegiances

**Flameclan:** ***Bold and Brave***

*Leader:* Frozenstar (white and grey dappled she cat with ice blue eyes)

*Deputy:* Shadowtail (dark furred tom with amber eyes)

*Medicine cat:* Wishberry (calico she cat with bright amber eyes)

*Warriors:*

Obsidianpelt (black tom with blue dragon wings)

Stoneclaw (light grey grey tom with green eyes)

Ashwhisper (grey and white she cat with amber eyes)

Cindernose (grey she cat with grey eyes)

Dustfur (light brown tom with green eyes)

Echofeather (sand coloured she cat with amber eyes)

Embergaze (brown tabby she cat with green eyes)

Burningfire (orange tom with amber eyes)

Honeytail (ginger she cat with green eyes)

*Apprentices:*

Pinepaw (light brown tom with green eyes)

*Queens/Kits:*

Solarflare (light orange she cat with blue eyes and orange feathered wings)
*Kits:*
Flarekit (orange furred she cat with yellow eyes)
Bouncekit (black and red tom with red eyes)
Falconkit (black and blue tom with blue eyes)
Crimsonkit (red furred she cat with bright amber eyes)

Oceancloud (blue and grey she cat with blue eyes)
*Kits:*
Pebblekit (light grey grey tom with green eyes)
Thunderkit (blue and grey tom with green eyes)
Pigeonkit (grey tom with blue eyes)

*Elders:*

Violetspring (light grey she cat with violet eyes)

**Lightclan:** ***The Determined and Brave***

*Leader:* Creamstar

*Deputy:* Stonefeather

*Medicine cat:* Ferntail

*Medicine cat apprentice:* Treepaw

*Warriors:*

Beaverclaw

Rosefoot

Badgertooth

Bravefang

Gorseleg

Whalenose <--- Best name in Warriors history

Orangepelt

Tigerfur

Circleclaw

Trianglepelt

*Apprentices:*

Robinpaw

Bigpaw

Slowpaw

*Queens/Kits:*

Wolfheart
*Kits:* Barkkit, Wildkit

Adderclaw
*Kits:* Greenkit

*Elders:*

None

**Magiclan: *The Quick and Calculated***

*Leader:* Harestar

*Deputy*: Cheetahleap

*Medicine cat*: Heronfur

*Warriors:*

Yellowflight

Shinetail

Dirtfur

Splashwhisker

Greysky

Flowercrown

Sharkfin

Lavagaze

Redpelt

*Apprentices*:

Jadepaw

*Queens/Kits:*

Poppystream
*Kits:* Breezekit, Leafkit

Sandfur
*Kits:* Rabbitkit

*Elders:*

Eaglewing

**Monsterclan: *The Strong and Fearless***

*Leader:* Winterstar

*Deputy:* Venomfang

*Medicine cat:* Sheepnose

*Warriors:*

Birdwing

Snowtail

Sparrowfoot

Whitefur

Goldfeather

Bluetear

Eggtail

Leafstorm

Ebonygaze

*Apprentices:*

Daisypaw

*Queens/Kits:*

Sootear
*Kits:* Darkkit, Grasskit

*Elders:*

Brokensong

# Prologue

The mewls of newborn kits floated around Flameclan's camp. All members of the clan were gathered around the nursery entrance as the medicine cat, Wishberry, emerged from the darkness of the den. The healer's amber eyes shone bright with joy as she announced the news she beared. "Two toms and two she kits." The clan broke into light cheers and parted to let Wishberry trot back into the medicine den.

Within the nursery, sheltered from the strong greenleaf sunlight, lay a light orange queen. She lay curled in her nest, her orange feathered wings wrapped around her four newborn kits. Beside the queen sat a stocky black tom with blue scaly wings.

"Let me see them again." The tom breathed, leaning over so that his muzzle brushed against the feathers of his mate's wings. The she cat's orange wings lifted up and curled behind her back, revealing the four bundles at her belly. A black and blue tom, a black and red tom, an orange she kit and a red she kit. They suckled greedily from the mother's belly, kicking and pushing at eachother. Healthy and strong.

"Aren't they beautiful?" The queen whispered, giving the orange she kit a loving nuzzle. "She looks just like me. I'd like to call her Flarekit."

The tom dipped his head. "A wonderful choice, Solarflare. She will honor your name forever."

"What about this little tom?" Solarflare licked the black and blue tom on the head. "He looks like you, Obsidianpelt."

"Falconkit." Obsidianpelt replied with a slight smile. "He will soar through the skies like a falcon once he receives his wings."

The golden she cat purred and turned to the two remaining kits, the red and black tom and pure red she kit. "I wonder where they got

the red from." She murmured. "I don't have any red fur in my family."

"My brother has a red tail." Obsidianpelt pointed out. "Perhaps that's where they got it from."

"That would explain this kit," Solarflare stroked her tail along the black and red tom, "But what about her?" She looked at the small completely red she kit, frowning. "Don't you find it a bit odd?"

"It is strange." Obsidianpelt agreed. "But nevermind that, they are our kits. It doesn't matter what fur colour they have, so long as they get their wings and grow to be strong warriors. Now what are we naming the last two?"

"How about..." Solarflare tilted her head to the side as she thought about suitable names for the two kits. "Bouncekit for the tom and... Redkit for the she cat?"

"No, not Redkit." Obsidianpelt shook his head. "We need something more unique than '*Redkit*.'"

Solarflare thought harder, staring at the little red she cat as she suckled. "What about Crimsonkit?"

A wide smile met Obsidianpelt's lips. "Yes, Crimsonkit it is."

---

It was late evening when the queen drifted from her light naps into a deep sleep. Solarflare awoke in a dream, standing in a calm and misty clearing. Her bright blue eyes scanned the area and she called out softly. "Hello? Anybody there?"

Her dreams normally consisted of memories from the fun adventures she had gone on with her kin as a young kit. It used to sadden her- remembering her tribe. However, more recently it kept her going, kept her alive.The Tribe of Winged Cats, they had called thenselves; living free among the tallest mountains, inaccessible to any non-winged creatures.

Even so, twolegs found a way up and they crashed into their

territory, bearing loud boom sticks that could shoot a cat from tree-lengths away. The tribe tried to fight back, chase the twolegs away. But one by one they all dropped dead, wings sliced from their backs like trophies for the hunters. After the tribe leader was slain during a hunting party, the remaining members fled the mountains and scattered into the forests and moorlands below.

Solarflare shook her head, scattering the traumatic memories into the deep corners of her mind. She had lost her sister in those terrible moons before fleeing; shot right before her eyes. She remembered Shade's eyes widen as she fell, her dark red blood splattering against Solar's fur. If Obsidian hadn't urged her to hide in a nearby cave, Solar would've died beside her sister.

"Solarflare, focus."

She looked up to see a shining grey she cat standing before her. Solarflare recognised her as Flameclan's former leader, Cherrystar. "Why are you here?" The ginger she cat asked, her feathered wings shifting from their position folded on her back.

"I come bearing grave news." Cherrystar murmured, voice filled with sorrow. "One of your kits, Crimsonkit, may grow into a great threat to Flameclan's survival."

"What? How?" Solarflare's eyes widenened. Perhaps they had been right to worry about her strange fur colouring; it had been an omen.

Cherrystar's lips formed a straight line, her eyes glimmering with an odd, almost wary look. "Her heart gleams with a strange darkness, covered in a cocoon of light. If that light fades, it will mean the end of Flameclan. You must lead Crimsonkit's way, guide her. Lead her to be a good warrior. Do not let that darkness slip out."

Solarflare swallowed thickly and dipped her head. "I will try my best."

"No, you *will* do it! The fate of Flameclan lies in your paws, Solarflare!" Cherrystar hissed, her eyes suddenly blazing up in desperate fury. "Nurture the light within Crimsonkit and she will save the clan, leave her to forge her own destiny and Flameclan will

die by her claws."

Solarflare opened her jaws to argue, but Cherrystar hissed. "Quiet! This prophecy should remind you what to do if you ever grow lost..."

*Born with the pelt of her fallen tribe's blood, she shall rise within the flames. She will possess the power to feed the inferno and grow strong, or suck the air from it and rule with the shadows.*

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# Chapter 1

[image]

Sharp morning light pierced through the nursery and Crimsonkit whimpered. "Owie! The light hurts!" She wriggled in the moss nest, eyes still tightly shut. "Mumma help me!"

A soft and comforting tail wrapped itself protectively around Crimsonkit, pulling her closer to her mother. "There, there little one." Her soothing voice purred above her head. Her mother's warm breath tickled her ear fur and she nuzzled Crimsonkit's fur. "You're a moon old, by now you must be used to the daylight."

Crimsonkit shook her head and snuggled closer to her mother, shielding herself from the sunlight. "Greenleaf sunlight is painful to look at."

"It won't be long until Leaf-fall." Her mother purred and rasped her tongue over her thick furred head. "Then you'll be able to see snow for the first time." She shifted in her nest slightly and nudged Crimsonkit with her tail. "Why don't you go out now? I'm sure the others will want to play with you."

Crimsonkit bit back a retort. The other kits didn't like playing with her because of her heritage. Especially Puddlekit. He always found ways to bully her about how her parents were different to the rest of the cats of Flameclan. They had wings and odd fur colourings, something Crimsonkit had grown to learn was a rare gift that she should be grateful for.

Without another word, Crimsonkit crawled out of the warm nest and glanced up at her mother, her eyes now open. Her eyes stung slightly from the light but she fought through the discomfort and meowed to her mother. "Why do you and father have wings?"

"That's a story for another day." Her light orange pelt glowed from the sun rays that filtered through small cracks in the nursery wall. And her gleaming blue eyes were soft and kind as she urged

Crimsonkit outside. "Go on now. Have fun."

With a barely audible sigh, Crimsonkit stalked out of the nursery, her pelt bristling slightly as she brushed past the lichen that sheltered the entrance.

She stepped into the main clearing of Flameclan camp. A few stray cats who weren't on patrol sat lazily around the fresh-kill pile, exchanging hunting tactics. The damp air and distant rain clouds told her that it had been raining earlier. She glanced down to look in a puddle.

Crimsonkit had thick, blood red fur with bright, glittering amber eyes. She smiled down at her reflection, her tiny fangs gleaming in the morning sunlight. She looked so fierce with her red fur. Crimsonkit couldn't wait until she reached six moons, then she'd be blessed with her wings. With wings, she'd be even more scary-looking!

She had dreamed of the day she would get her wings. She imagined them to be red, like her fur. Magnificent red feathered wings that would allow her to soar through the skies as weightless as a bird.

"Crimsonkit!" Bouncekit yowled as he bounded toward his sister, his black and red tail sticking high in the air. "You finally left the nursery! Now we can play a fair game of two versus two!" The black and red tom kit pranced around her, his gleaming red eyes travelling over her shoulder at something behind her. Crimsonkit noticed the frown that fell upon her brother's lips and turned around to see the three kits she dreaded most heading for them.

Pebblekit was at the lead, the grey tom standing at least half a head taller than Bouncekit, and one head taller than Crimsonkit. Behind him prowled Pigeonkit and Thunderkit. Together, the three toms looked terrifying. They were only half a moon older than Crimsonkit and her siblings but they were already so much bigger.

Crimsonkit forced her limbs to stop trembling as Pebblekit stopped right before her, pointedly glaring down at her. "Would you look at that. The freaks are out of their hidey-holes." His green gaze glanced at Bouncekit, who had slipped behind Crimsonkit to hide.

"We're not freaks!" Crimsonkit squeaked, her voice shaking as she stared up at the older kits who towered over her.

"Oh you will be, in five moons time." Thunderkit laughed, grinning down at the two littermates cowering before them. "When your wings pop out."

"Hey!" Falconkit's low growl sounded from behind them and Crimsonkit looked up to see her black and blue furred brother glaring at Pebblekit, Pigeonkit and Jaguarkit. Falconkit easily rivalled Pebblekit in size, causing the three bullies to take a few steps back. "Leave Crimsonkit and Bouncekit alone!"

Pebblekit sniffed in anger and spat at Crimsonkit. "You need to be saved by your big brother. Pathetic!" Falconkit let out another warning snarl and Pebblekit hurried away, back into the nursery with his littermates.

Falconkit nudged Crimsonkit and Bouncekit up, his small blue horns on his forehead acting as firm guidance for them. Flarekit turned up a few moments later, her yellow eyes shining. "Good job Falconkit! You really taught Pebblekit a lesson!"

Falconkit nodded, chuckling. "Nobody bullies my littermates and gets away with it."

Crimsonkit smiled, glad to have a brother like Falconkit.

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**I have tagged a picture of NoName (Crimsonkit) and her siblings above for anyone here who doesn't follow my Instagram :3**

# Chapter 2

"Tell us again about the battle with Magiclan! Please!" Bouncekit begged, circling Violetspring with his long black tail sticking high in the air.

The elderly she cat chuckled softly at the four kits crowding her. "Alright, alright. Sit down, kits, and listen closely." Violetspring nudged each kit in turn to sit in front of her before beginning her story. "It was a grey, miserable and rainy day..."

Crimsonkit listened intently, her ears pricked as the elder explained the story of how Magiclan ambushed Flameclan's camp seasons ago. She could barely keep her paws still as the battle was explained; she imagined tearing her claws through Magiclan flesh, seeing their mangy blood splatter on the ground. It wasn't until Bouncekit gave her a sharp nip on the ear that Crimsonkit realised she had nearly sat on him with all her fidgeting.

"And that was how Flameclan beat Magiclan in battle." Violetspring concluded with a small smile.

"Awesome!" Bouncekit squealed, snapping to his paws. "Tell another one please!"

Violetspring rolled her eyes and replied. "Only if you bring me a nice juicy mouse to eat."

"Done!" Crimsonkit had never seen Bouncekit run so fast; the black and red kit dashed out of the elders den and made a beeline for the fresh-kill pile, nearly crashing into Pinepaw on his way there. The brown apprentice hissed and darted out of the way, nearly dropping the moss in his jaws.

"Stupid kits." Pinepaw muttered as he continued on toward the apprentices den.

Flarekit and Falconkit darted out after their brother with

Crimsonkit trailing after them. Together, the four littermates managed to haul a plump mouse all the way across the main clearing and into the elders den. Violetspring gasped and grinned at her prey. "Well done!" She meowed, eyes shining. "This definitely deserves another story!"

Crimsonkit eagerly sat down before the elder, staring up at her with anticipation as she began her next story about Flameclan's history.

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It was just past sunhigh when Crimsonkit trotted out of the elders den. The camp was slowly getting fuller as more warriors returned from patrols to have a snack and chat by the fresh-kill pile.

The red she cat spotted her father padding into camp with a bird in his jaws and she trotted over to him. "Hey Dad!"

"Oh hello Crimsonkit." Obsidianpelt greeted, placing his prey on the pile before turning to face her. "How's your day been?"

"Violetspring told us loads of stories, it was great." Crimsonkit smiled and glanced at the bird her father had caught. "How'd you catch the bird?"

Obsidianpelt chuckled and flexed his wings. "I flew after it and caught it in mid-air." The dark grey tom let out a wistful sigh. "Just how we hunted in the Tribe.."

Crimsonkit pawed his wings, gliding her paw pads along the scales. "Why do I have to wait for my wings to come? Why can't they just pop out now?"

"The transformation is brutal and a young kit like you would never survive the experience." Obsidianpelt meowed, his eyes suddenly changing to a haunted look, as if he was reminiscing his own transformation. "Besides, it's not long now. Only five more moons."

"But that's so far away!" Crimsonkit whined, twirling around her father's legs. "It's not fair."

Obsidianpelt flicked her ears with his tail. "Go play with the other

kits and let me rest for a bit." He chuckled, sitting down to eat.

Crimsonkit flicked her tail in farewell and headed towards the nursery, where she had spotted her siblings disappear into.

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# Chapter 3

"Worthless scrap!" Pebblepaw hissed as he trotted past Crimsonkit in the direction of the camp exit. "Get out of my way!" The newly made apprentice flicked his tail arrogantly as he followed his mentor out of the main clearing and into the moorland beyond.

Crimsonkit hissed. Pebblepaw had barely been an apprentice for more than a few minutes and he was already strutting around camp like he owned the place. Bouncekit let out an irritable sigh from beside Crimsonkit and stalked away in the direction of the nursery. She watched her brother go with a faint frown on her lips. They were a moon away from receiving their wings and tensions were high between them. Flarekit had even chosen to sleep alone in her own nest, saying that she was too old to sleep with their mother. Strangely, Solarflare hadn't protested.

Falconkit was sitting in the corner of the fresh-kill pile. He had changed the most. The grey and blue tom always kept to himself, rarely ever speaking to his littermates. Thought he did occasionally save Crimsonkit from Pebblepaw, Thunderkit and Pigeonkit when the jeers got out of control.

Crimsonkit had never felt so alone; even her own littermates didn't want to be around her. But she didn't blame them, they were growing up. They didn't need their siblings company as much. She just wished she could do the same but everytime she tried to make new friends or play her own games she would be mocked by the others.

"Crimsonkit?" It was Wishberry, the medicine cat. The calico she cat had a bundle of herbs in her jaws as she headed into the medicine den. "Are you alright?"

"Uh.." Crimsonkit stuttered. "Yeah.. I'm fine." She forced a wide smile on her lips to reassure the medicine cat. Wishberry was one of the few cats of Flameclan who she liked- she was always so nice and cared about her well being. In fact, Wishberry cared about

every single individual cat in the clan. It filled Crimsonkit with admiration everytime she thought about it. Medicine cats were amazing.

Wishberry didn't believe Crimsonkit's obvious lie and curled her tail around her little red furred body. "Come with me, I need your help with something."

Crimsonkit pricked her ears in interest, smiling at the idea of helping the medicine cat. "Really? You want my help?"

"There's something special about you, Crimsonkit. I don't know what it is yet, but I'm sure we'll find out soon." The medicine cat murmured softly, leading her gently into the medicine den with her. "Now," she put down the herb bundle, "do you think you could sort through these herbs for me?"

"Sure!" Crimsonkit happily unwrapped the sharp-smelling bundle and stared at the different herbs at her paws. "How do I know which are which?"

"You don't need to know, all you need to do is sort the different ones apart. Like this." Wishberry picked up a pawful of little black seeds. "These poppy seeds go here in a pile, and these.." She picked up a different looking herb. "Go over here." She placed the herb down in its own pile. "Got it?"

"Yep." Crimsonkit smiled and began carefully sorting through the herbs.

After she had successfully put all the herbs in their separate piles, Wishberry purred. "Brilliantly done." She picked up each pile and placed them in the little holes in the den wall where she kept her herbs.

Crimsonkit beamed proudly and stood up to leave the den but Wishberry called out. "Wait a moment."

Crimsonkit paused, turning to face the medicine cat.

Wishberry meowed in a soft tone. "I've been looking for an apprentice for a while now.. and I think you might be the one."

Crimsonkit blinked in surprise. She had no plans of becoming a medicine cat, she wanted to be a warrior. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't get the words out. She didn't want to risk losing her only friend. "Uhm.." She swallowed nervously, her eyes glittering apologetically.

Wishberry seemed to get the silent message and she let out a forced chuckled. "It's alright, it was only a suggestion.." The calico she cat twitched her whiskers with a sigh. "Go on now, I'm fine on my own."

Crimsonkit nodded stiffly and turned around again, bounding out of the medicine den. Once she was back in the fresh, crisp air of midday leaf-fall she let out a soft sigh. Guilt nagged at her, tugging her back to the medicine den to accept Wishberry's offer but she fought against her feelings and padded back to the nursery.

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Crimsonkit awoke during the night to the sound of hushed voices outside the nursery. Lifting her head sluggishly, she noticed Solarflare was not in the nest. She stood up, creeping slowly from the nest and towards the den wall, where the voices were coming from.

"She rejected my offer." It was Wishberry who spoke.

Her mother whispered next. "Mouse-dung. She mustn't become a warrior. How else can we stop it?"

Crimsonkit stumbled backwards, eyes wide. *Mother told Wishberry to ask me about becoming her apprentice?* All previous guilt vanished in an instant, replaced by anger. *Why doesn't she want me to be a warrior?* She dug her claws into the ground and forced down a growl of fury. *Wishberry isn't really my friend after all! She's just scheming with Solarflare to stop me from being a warrior! My own mother hates me so much that she doesn't want me to be happy!*

By the time Solarflare had padded back into the nursery, Crimsonkit was back in the nest with her eyes shut as if nothing had happen.

# Chapter 4

Crimsonkit awoke early, bounding out of the nursery with a happy squeal. Her siblings tumbled after her with equal excitement. Their apprentice ceremony was happening that day, that also meant that the clock began ticking for them to receive their wings. They had until they reached ten moons old.

"We're going to get our wings!" Bouncekit squealed joyfully, red eyes bright and happy.

Crimsonkit grinned, her gaze travelling to the leaders den where Frozenstar emerged. The white and grey dappled she cat gave the four kits a small smile before heading towards the HighRock. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the HighRock for a clan meeting!"

Crimsonkit dashed for the HighRock, Bouncekit and Flarekit pushing past her to get there first. She stumbled and Falconkit silently gave her a small nudge to keep her balanced before going to join his brother and sister.

The clan slowly emerged from their dens into the cool morning air. Weak leaf-fall sunlight shone down on them, giving Crimsonkit shivers. Pebblepaw and his siblings sneered at the four kits, sticking their tongues out as they sat down near them. Crimsonkit growled. Once she learned some fighting moves she'd give the smug grey tom a real beating.

Her dark thoughts were interrupted by Frozenstar's strong voice ringing clearly around the main clearing.

"Falconkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Falconpaw. Your mentor will be Ashwhisper. I hope Ashwhisper will pass down all she knows on to you."

The grey and white warrior blinked amber eyes in surprise, a wide smile on her lips as she strode towards her new apprentice. Falconpaw grinned happily and touched noses with his mentor before going to sit with her to watch the rest of the ceremony.

Frozenstar beamed down at the three remaining kits. "Flarekit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Flarepaw. Your mentor will be Cindernose. I hope she will pass down all she knows on to you."

Cindernose pricked her ears and trotted eagerly up to Flarepaw. The two touched noses and joined Ashwhisper and Falconpaw.

Crimsonkit saw Frozenstar's gaze rest upon Bouncekit and she knew he would be next. "Bouncekit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Bounceaw. Your mentor will be Dustfur. I hope he will pass down all he knows on to you."

The light brown warrior grinned as his name was called, as if he had been expecting it, and padded up to Bouncepaw. "You will be a mighty warrior." He purred as he touched Bouncepaw's nose.

As Bouncepaw and his new mentor stepped aside to join the others, Crimsonkit felt all eyes fall down to her and she suddenly had the urge to run and hide from the attention. Pebblepaw's glare didn't help at all, it was as if he were mentally pulling her whiskers out one by one.

Finally, Frozenstar spoke. "Crimsonkit, you have reached the age of six moons, and it is time for you to be apprenticed. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Crimsonpaw. Your mentor will be..." The Flameclan leader paused and Crimsonkit saw her glance briefly at Solarflare with a faint nod. "Me."

The clan burst into yowls of shock and surprise and Crimsonpaw felt her heart plummet in her chest. *Mother is scheming with Frozenstar as well! She got the leader on her side so that I can't be a*

*warrior!* She unsheathed her claws and dug them into the ground, struggling to stop the surge of fury rushing right under her skin.

"I hope I will pass down all I know on to you." Frozenstar concluded with a swift dip of her head and jumped off the HighRock to Crimsonpaw's side.

_____

"This is the Lightclan border." Frozenstar meowed as they stopped before the treeline of an oak forest.

Crimsonpaw let out a small grumble of acknowledgement, staring ahead at the shadowy forest beyond them. The sharp scent of Lightclan drifted across to reach her nose and she curled her lip. "It smells funny."

"They are funny cats." Frozenstar mused, smiling down at Crimsonpaw. "But they are friends, not enemies."

The red furred apprentice sighed and blinked her bright amber eyes in annoyance. She had been split from the patrol that Falonpaw, Bouncepaw and Flarepaw got to go on and instead taken on a boring tour of the territory. Her siblings got to go hunting on their first day, while Crimsonpaw was stuck learning the territory. She would've been ok with it had Frozenstar not been the one to do it. She could see it in the leader's ice blue eyes- Frozenstar wanted to assess her personality away from the other cats and find a way to get her to fail her warrior assessment and become a medicine cat.

Frozenstar cleared her throat and gave Crimsonpaw a stiff smile. "Come on, the Magiclan border isn't far from here." The white and grey dappled she cat led the way along the Lightclan border, heading towards Magiclan's side of the moorland.

The leader and apprentice trotted across the wind-swept grass, over small hills and along shallow dips. On the way, they passed the hunting patrol chasing down a hare. Crimsonpaw had stopped to watch as the three warriors of the patrol managed to bring down the hare using teamwork; one cat running directly behind their prey while the other two lay in wait further ahead. She had spotted her

siblings waiting on a hill on the other side and felt the pang of jealousy inside her that had begun to grow familiar as the day passed.

Now they stood at the Magiclan border. Frozenstar was telling a story of how the border was established, but Crimsonpaw didn't bother listening. Instead she turned her attention to the sky above her head. It was a blue day with small white clouds scattered about the sky and the weather was nice- not too cold or too hot. Crimsonpaw wondered if Starclan was watching over her from the fluffy clouds above. Did they see how unfair her life was? Were they going to stop it?

Crimsonpaw sent a silent prayer to her ancestors for them to let her become a warrior. Starclan weren't cruel, right? They'd give her a chance to prove herself.

"Crimsonpaw are you even listening?" Frozenstar flicked her tail in her face and Crimsonpaw scrunched up her muzzle as grey fur fell on her nose.

"Yes I'm listening."

Frozenstar sighed. "Then what did I just say?"

Crimsonpaw let out a quilty chuckle. "I forgot?"

"If you don't start listening, you're never going to learn a thing." Frozenstar grumbled and gestured with her paw. "Come closer and listen closely this time..."

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# Chapter 5

The late morning sun shone high in the clear blue sky as Crimsonpaw returned to camp after a lone hunt. Her jaws were empty- she had failed to catch anything. It wasn't her fault though, after four days Frozenstar had managed to teach Crimsonpaw only the bare minimum. She still had no idea how to fight and everytime she saw her siblings play-fighting by the apprentices den, she felt her good friend Jealousy make an appearance.

The camp was empty, save for a few napping cats around camp.

"Hey Crimsonpaw, think fast!"

The red furred she cat looked up just in time to see a ball of moss coming straight for her. She let out a squeak of surprise as the mossball slammed into her face. It didn't hurt, but she was shaken by the surprise.

Looking up to see who threw the mossball, Crimsonpaw saw Pebblepaw laughing at her with his brothers. "Scared of a mossball?" The grey tom sneered, eyes alight with amusement.

Crimsonpaw growled, a flash of courage overpowering the fear. "Next time you do that you'll have a face full of my claws!"

"Oo, I'm so scared." Pebblepaw laughed and strolled closer to her.

Pigeonpaw broke away from Pebblepaw's side and began circling behind Crimsonpaw. "I bet you can't even fight!"

"I dare you to try and hit me!" Thunderpaw jeered, pacing around Crimsonpaw.

The three toms had surrounded her, towering over her. She gritted her teeth angrily and unsheathed her claws, refusing to back down. "I'm not scared of you!"

"Then show us what you can do." Pebblepaw smirked and brought

his head down to that they were nose-to-nose. "I dare you." He whispered.

And so she dared.

Crimsonpaw bared her teeth and lashed out with her claws, aiming to claw the wide smirk off Pebblepaw's face. The grey tom easily side-stepped, chuckling down at her.

She lunged for Pebblepaw but she barely got close to him before Thunderpaw's claws latched onto her haunches, dragging her backwards. She twisted and swiped at his muzzle but he let go of her and ducked away, his green eyes glimmering joyfully. Crimsonpaw turned just in time to see Pebblepaw swipe at her and she narrowly dodged, gasping at the precision in his blow.

The next attack came from Pigeonpaw, the grey tom digging his claws into her back and using his weight to yank her off her paws and onto the ground. She hissed, winded from the impact.

Pebblepaw pinned her down beneath him and smirked triumphantly. "Looks like you really are just a soft piece of fluff."

Crimsonpaw growled and kicked at him, her hind claws scrabbling against his belly, but Thunderpaw grabbed her hind legs and held them down. She writhed and hissed furiously. "You've made your point, now leave me alone!"

"No, you need a reminder so that this never happens again." Pebblepaw grinned and unsheathed his claws, trailing them lightly along her chest.

Crimsonpaw freed one forepaw from the grey tom's grip and lashed out at his face, catching his cheek. He hissed, blood dripping from his fresh wound. "Don't do that again!"

"Make me!" She snarled and swiped again, latching onto his head with her claws. Pebblepaw growled and shook his head, trying to pin her forepaws back down. Unfortunately for Crimsonpaw, Pigeonpaw came to his brother's rescue and forced her forelegs back down and pinned them on either side of her head. She struggled

against them, but there was no escaping.

She forced down a cry of pain as Pebblepaw sliced her side with his claws. He didn't seem satisfied by her reaction and dug his claw in deeper, finally earning a small shriek from her.

Pebblepaw leaned down and glared right into her amber eyes. "Next time you threaten me like that, remember this encounter." He then released her, his brothers following as he stalked across the empty clearing and into the apprentice den.

Crimsonpaw stayed where she was, staring up at the sky as she felt her warm blood seep through her fur.

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# Chapter 6

Crimsonpaw stepped carefully along the moorland, following the strong scent trail of her rabbit. The cold wind tugged at her fur and she stiffened as the rabbit's scent grew stronger. She was closing in.

The red furred she cat padded slowly and silently around a bush and rounded the corner to see her prey sniffing at a gorse bush. The grey rabbit had no idea she was closing in on it.

She felt Frozenstar's judging gaze follow her as she crept towards her prey, drawing nearly three tail-lengths away from it.

Then, Crimsonpaw leapt.

Her claws flew for the rabbit, but instead they connected with something else and barely a heartbeat later she slammed into a golden furred body. Crimsonpaw rolled with the feline, grunting as he fell ontop of her. "Hey! Watch where you're going!" She snarled, but stopped short when she sniffed his pelt and realised he was not from Flameclan. "Intruder!"

The golden tom rolled off Crimsonpaw and backed away, flustered from the fall. "I-I didn't mean to intrude I was being chased!"

Just to make sure, Crimsonpaw glanced over his shoulder to see if there were any cats in pursuit. Luckily, the moorland stretching behind him was empty.

Frozenstar trotted up to the two, ears back and eyes wary of the newcomer. "Who is this?"

"M-my name is Jaguar." The tom gasped, turning to look at Frozenstar. With the wind pulling back her fur and her icy blue eyes narrowed, the Flameclan leader looked terrifying. "Please don't kill me."

It was only then that Crimsonpaw noticed a deep gash in the rogue's

side. He looked gaunt from hunger, his eyes shimmering with starvation. He also looked about her age. "Who was chasing you?" She asked, feeling Frozenstar glare at her for talking.

"H-huge cats." He whispered, eyes wide. "A whole patrol of them. Over there.." Jaguar pointed in the direction of Monsterclan and Crimsonpaw's eyes widened.

"Monsterclan attacked you." She explained. "They're ruthless and deadly, don't want to be messing with them."

Frozenstar flicked her tail for silence and Crimsonpaw obeyed, shutting her mouth. Jaguar stared between leader and apprentice, wondering what to make of them.

Eventually, Frozenstar meowed. "I am Frozenstar, leader of Flameclan. You have trespassed on our territory. Under normal circumstances, you'd have been chased out with a few scratches to remember us by." As the leader spoke, Jaguar's eyes seemed to pop out of their sockets in fear. "But because you are injured, young and starved we will take you to our camp."

"Are you going to keep me prisoner there? Kill me?" Jaguar backed away further, focusing his eyes on Frozenstar. "I don't want to die!"

"You're not going to die." Frozenstar reassured and gestured for him to follow her, but he stayed put. She stepped closer and he backed away.

Crimsonpaw studied Jaguar curiously. His golden spotted fur was bushed out, his keen blue eyes narrowed as he calculated an escape route. Frozenstar tried again to reach out for him and he hissed threateningly, lunging out of the way.

After her leader tried a few more times, Crimsonpaw decided she needed to step in. She strode closer to Jaguar and felt his burning blue gaze turn to her. She kept walking straight towards him, her amber eyes soft and comforting. Jaguar haulted his movements and stared at Crimsonpaw as she stopped a whisker length from him.

"Come with me, I'll take you somewhere safe." She whispered,

giving his shoulder a guiding nudge with her nose.

Jaguar, strangely enough, listened to her and began following her as she padded slowly back to Flameclan camp.

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# Chapter 7

In the medicine den, Wishberry fussed over Jaguar, saying how filthy his fur was. "Honestly, it looks as if you've been living in a twolegplace dumpster your whole life."

The golden tom snorted, his crystal blue eyes rolling. "Would you be surprised to know that I have?"

Wishberry just shrugged and silently slapped on some herbs to the gash on his side. Jaguar gritted his teeth and glared up at the medicine cat. "Ow!"

The calico she cat smiled innocently and went back to her herb supply to grab some cobwebs. "So Crimsonpaw, how was your hunt?"

Crimsonpaw blinked from where she sat in the shadows of the medicine den, raising her head to look at the medicine cat. "Why would you want to know?"

"Just starting a conversation." Wishberry sighed and wrapped the cobwebs on Jaguar's side before looking back at Crimsonpaw. "Take him to the fresh-kill pile and give him some food. Do not let him leave until he has eaten a full meal." She instructed, eyes stern.

Crimsonpaw dipped her head and stood up, leading Jaguar out of the medicine den. The golden tom trailed at her heels, grumbling to himself.

"What was that?" Crimsonpaw asked, not glancing at him as she stopped at the fresh-kill pile.

"Herb Cat isn't very nice." Jaguar muttered, eyes fixed on the ground before him as he stopped before the pile of prey.

"'Herb Cat.'" Crimsonpaw echoed, letting out a small laugh. "Her name is Wishberry."

Jaguar growled. "Well, she isn't nice."

Crimsonpaw glanced at the medicine den and nodded in agreement. "No she's not." She would never forgive the medicine cat for siding with her mother to try and make her the medicine cat apprentice. And she would forever hate Frozenstar, too, for the same reason.

Jaguar broke her thoughts with a small whistle. "That's a whole lot of food..." She saw him lick his lips hungrily at the sight.

Crimsonpaw glanced back at the fresh-kill pile. "Plenty for every member of the clan." She took a mouse for herself and settled down near the pile. "And guests, too." She added, giving a pointed glance at him.

The golden spotted tom smiled faintly at her and chose a rabbit for himself, crouching down next to Crimsonpaw to eat.

They ate in silence, watching as the other clan members settled down for their evening meals. Soon the camp was teeming with cats, putting Jaguar on edge.

Crimsonpaw felt Jaguar tense beside her as a voice snapped behind them. "Hey Crimsonpaw!"

She sighed and looked up to see Pebblepaw striding towards her. "Oh hey Pebblepaw." She forced a bitter smile at the grey tom and he seethed.

"Still haven't learned not to talk back to me?" The older apprentice sneered, leaning down so that his hot breath fanned her forehead. Crimsonpaw found her eyes glancing absent-mindedly to the scars on her side left there from their last encounter.

She swallowed thickly and turned her gaze to look up at Pebblepaw. "Back off."

Pebblepaw just rolled his eyes. "Huh, looks like you need another beating to get it through your thick skull."

Jaguar was watching the two converse with narrowed eyes, his paws working on the ground.

Luckily, Shadowtail appeared behind Pebblepaw. The dark furred deputy narrowed his eyes at his apprentice and rumbled. "Pebblepaw, step away from her."

Pebblepaw growled fiercely and muttered to Crimsonpaw. "I'll get you next time, that's a promise." Then he leaned away from her, straightening. The grey apprentice began stalking away with Shadowtail following. Crimsonpaw pricked her ears when she heard Pebblepaw growl at his mentor. "I thought you said it was okay to bully the freaks."

Shadowtail's reply was more hushed, but Crimsonpaw still heard it. "Not when there are so many cats around."

Jaguar let out a snarl from beside Crimsonpaw. "That foxheart!"

Crimsonpaw sighed and rested her head on her paws, ears drooping. "It seems like everyone is out to get me lately... Mother, Wishberry, Frozenstar, Pebblepaw and his siblings and now Shadowtail too. Does the whole clan hate me?"

"I know I'm not part of your clan, but I don't hate you..." Jaguar murmured, looking at her sympathetically.

Crimsonpaw glanced at him, her amber eyes brightening slightly. "Really?"

"So far you've only showed me kindness, so I have no reason to hate you." He offered her a lazy grin. "Plus, your red fur is pretty cool."

Crimsonpaw's lips twisted into the same grin and she murmured. "Thank you."

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**I'm sure you can all see where this is going...**

# Chapter 8

*Finally, some real battle training!*

Crimsonpaw couldn't keep the grin from her face as Frozenstar led her, Bouncepaw, Flarepaw and Falconpaw into the training clearing. She glanced at her siblings and noticed that they were all bigger than her with faint muscles rippling under their skin. They had all been apprentices for a full moon, yet Crimsonpaw's littermates looked way older than her.

Crimsonpaw glanced self-consciously at the ground as Frozenstar looked down at her. She only raised her head again when her mentor started speaking. "You're going to be sparring in pairs. Flarepaw and Crimsonpaw versus Falconpaw and Bouncepaw.

"Aw!" Flarepaw sighed dramatically. "Why do I have to go with Crimsonpaw?"

"Because you are the most talented fighter here." Frozenstar replied, her voice stern. "Now go to your team's side of the clearing. You have a few moments to devise a plan." The white and grey dappled she cat sat down to watch as the apprentices formulated their plans of attack.

Flarepaw sighed and turned to Crimsonpaw once they were at their side of the training clearing. "Here's the plan, I do the fighting and you don't whine if you get hurt. Got it?"

Crimsonpaw's body trembled with irritation and she hissed. "I'm not completely helpless, Flarepaw!"

"Really?" The golden she cat rolled her eyes. "Then prove it. You go after Bouncepaw and I'll take Falconpaw."

Crimsonpaw glanced across the clearing at her two brothers. Bouncepaw was the closest to her size, but he was still bigger. She felt his dark red eyes ficker to her and she gulped when she saw a

determined spark in his eyes. He was going to target her.

Flarepaw gave her a hard nudge. "Ready?"

Crimsonpaw doubted she was, but she muttered. "Yes."

Frozenstar was officially the worst mentor ever, throwing her straight into a fight- even if it was a training session. Crimsonpaw knew nothing about fighting, absolutely nothing. Perhaps she was doing this to shock her into being a medicine cat. *Well it won't work!* Crimsonpaw bared her teeth. *I'm going to prove everyone wrong! I am a warrior!*

"Start!" Frozenstar yowled and the four apprentices surged forwards.

Crimsonpaw darted for Bouncepaw and he nimbly skipped away, his long black and red tipped tail lashing with excitement. "Come on Crimson! Try and get me! I dare you!" He grinned playfully as he dodged her blows.

*"I dare you to try and hit me!"* Thunderpaw's voice echoed in her head and she flattened her ears to block it out.

With a shriek, she lunged again and caught Bouncepaw's muzzle. The dark furred tom stumbled backwards with a hiss and pounced on her, pinning her down with ease. "Nice try!" He chuckled slyly and gave her neck a teasing bite. "But now you're dead!"

Crimsonpaw leashed her rage, forcing down a yowl of anguish, and sighed in defeat. "Good fight, Bouncepaw."

"Quick, but good." Her brother replied, still sitting on her.

"Can you get off now?" Crimsonpaw asked, rolling her eyes.

Bouncepaw chuckled. "Mm, fine." He went to step off her but suddenly tensed up, a cry escaping his lips. Crimsonpaw gasped in surprise as he collapsed ontop of her, his eyes wide with pain.

"Bouncepaw!" Crimsonpaw squeaked, wriggling out from under her brother to see something poking under the skin between his shoulders. *His wings!* Her eyes widened as he let out a shrill cry of

pain, writhing in the ground.

"What did you do to him?" Flarepaw roughly pushed Crimsonpaw away from Bouncepaw and stopped when she saw the ripples under the skin of his back. "His wings are coming!"

Frozenstar appeared behind them. "We need to get Bouncepaw back to camp where your parents can assist him."

Flarepaw and Falconpaw quickly picked Bouncepaw up between them and Crimsonpaw winced as her brother whimpered in pain. "It h-hurts!" He cried, eyes screwed shut.

Crimsonpaw followed slowly as her brother and sister carried Bouncepaw back to camp. She had expected the transformation to be painful... But Bouncepaw looked as if he were in pure agony.

The way back seemed a lot further away than before, the moorland wind tugging fiercely at their pelts as stormclouds wandered steadily closer to their territory.

At last they staggered into the main clearing, the clan quickly alert to the sounds of Bouncepaw's agonised wails.

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# Chapter 9

"The transformation has been known to take days to complete." Obsidianpelt was meowing as they placed Bouncepaw into a nest in the shelter of the medicine den.

Shortly after they had arrived at camp, the sky had decided it was time for a heavy thunderstorm. Crimsonpaw flinched as lightning lit up the dark grey sky and thunder rumbled overhead.

Wishberry took out some poppy seeds but Obsidianpelt shook his head. "He can't take herbs during this ordeal, it may affect the way his wings emerge."

Bouncepaw panted and let out a small cry of pain. "Are you sure I can't t-take any herbs?"

"Positive." Obsidianpelt replied, running his black tail along Bouncepaw's back. "Don't worry, the pain is all worth it."

Crimsonpaw nearly gagged as the lumps pushing against the skin of Bouncepaw's back suddenly twitched erratically, causing the black and red tom to howl in pain. Falconpaw glanced back at Crimsonpaw from where he sat near his brother. "Why don't you go and get something to eat?"

She knew her brother wanted only to get her out the den so that she didn't mess things up, and in normal circumstances she'd have snapped at him, but she was grateful for the excuse to leave. Crimsonpaw dipped her head and hurried out of the medicine den, nearly crashing straight into Jaguar.

The young tom glanced over her shoulder, his golden fur dark with water from the storm. "I was just coming in to see what all the yowling was about."

"Oh, it's Bouncepaw." Crimsonpaw muttered, her stomach turning as she heard her brother cry out loudly. "He's getting his wings." She

flattened her ears as rain drops fell on her pelt, making it heavy and awkward.

"Oh.." Jaguar glanced at her worriedly. "Will you have to go through that too?"

"If I want my wings, yes." Crimsonpaw sighed, but tried to stay optimistic and added. "It'll be worth it, and I bet it's not actually that agonising."

Jaguar shrugged, not reassured by her words at all. "Where are you off to now?"

Crimsonpaw glanced to the camp entrance. "As far away from my brother's screams as I can."

"I'll come with you." The rogue offered, his blue eyes following her gaze. "Don't want you getting into trouble in the storm."

"Ha!" Crimsonpaw laughed. "Like that would ever happen. You seem more prone to trouble than I am." As if to prove her point, lightning struck the ground close to Jaguar and he let out a shriek, leaping into her.

After the initial shock left Jaguar's eyes, he glanced back at Crimsonpaw. "Wanna bet?"

"Alright." Crimsonpaw smirked. "Whoever gets themselves into the most trouble before their warrior ceremony loses."

Jaguar blinked and chuckled. "I guess that means I'm sticking with Flameclan then, huh?"

"It seems so." Crimsonpaw smiled, her whiskers twitching against the rain. "Come on, I'll race you to the Lightclan border!"

Jaguar smirked widely. "Already eager to lose the bet then?"

"Have you forgotten that I'm a Flameclan cat? We are perfect moor runners!" Crimsonpaw giggled back, her amber eyes shining challengingly at the golden tom.

"And it seems you haven't realised that I am a purebred alley cat- we spend our entire lives running through rough terrain. I'm sure a soft moorland cat like you wouldn't survive more than a day where I'm from." Jaguar boasted.

"Then tomorrow that's where you're taking me." Crimsonpaw grinned.

"Deal." Jaguar nodded and without warning, took off for the camp entrance with his thin black-tipped tail streaming after him.

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# Chapter 10

The storm began to ease off as the two young cats pelted across the damp moorland and towards Lightclan's border. Jaguar beat Crimsonpaw by such a huge length that he had to double back after he reached the border and run back to find her.

Crimsonpaw was panting and gasping as she staggered towards the Lightclan border. "I... made.. it... finally!" She wheezed, the crisp, damp air like sharp thorns in her lungs.

Jaguar had padded next to her, letting her lean on him for the rest of the way. "I expected you to be slower than me, but not this slow!" He chuckled and sat down to lick his wet fur. "You'll never be able to run from the dangers of twolegplace tomorrow, I can't believe I agreed to this."

"Don't worry, I've got my claws as backup." Crimsonpaw panted, flopping ungracefully on her side. The cool mud seeped into her red fur and she grumbled.

"Storms are nice, but the water part of it sucks." Jaguar chuckled as he tried to lick the mud from his paws.

Crimsonpaw took a deep breath to calm her breathing before she replied. "Storms are scary."

"Only if you let them be scary." The golden tom responded, rasping his tongue around his claws. "The trick to being fearless is to acknowledge your fears and then slap them in the face with a fish."

"Where'd you get that from?" Crimsonpaw chuckled and looked up at him.

"Just a little something I made up." He grinned at her. "See? You're not afraid anymore. Humor works every time."

She smiled and rolled her eyes, standing up. "Why don't we go

hunting? Bring back some rabbits for the clan."

Jaguar nodded, sighing. "I don't think I'm ready for the responsibilities of clan life. Catching food for others as well as yourself, it's nonsense. Not being able to eat the food you catch while hunting, nonsense again." He opened his mouth to continued, but Crimsonpaw flicked her thick red tail in his face.

"Alright, I get it." She laughed. "I'm sure you'll find the advantages of clan life soon enough."

As they started towards the deeper part of the moorland, Jaguar continued to list all the ways clan life was horrible. Crimsonpaw found herself agreeing with him, her gaze travelling often to the lights of twolegplace beyond. She wondered what life was like out there. No drama or responsibilities. Just you on your own, with no worries except getting food and a nice place to sleep.

Eventually, they came across a series of rabbit holes. Crimsonpaw glanced at Jaguar. "Stand back and let the master show you how its done." She grinned as he rolled his eyes and sat back to watch.

She padded silently up to one of the holes and peered inside, listening. The sounds of scuffling paws on dirt met her ears. She glanced back at Jaguar. "Go to that hole and make noise." She ordered, pointing to a hole nearby.

Jaguar obeyed quietly and began stomping on the ground near the rabbit hole he had been directed to. Crimsonpaw waited as the rabbits shrieked, their pawsteps growing louder until suddenly a plump grey rabbit burst right into her jaws. She caught it, snapping its neck with a grin.

"Well done." Jaguar trotted up to her and took the rabbit from her hold, placing it down on the ground. "That was impressive."

Crimsonpaw beamed proudly. "Thanks."

The two turned when they heard movement inside the rabbit hole and a little white bunny shot out of it. Crimsonpaw lunged for it and trapped the bunny under her paws. She went to sink her teeth

into its neck when she caught sight of it's wide dark eyes.

Jaguar tapped her shoulder. "Are you going to kill it?"

The bunny and Crimsonpaw had a staring contest, and the bunny won. Crimsonpaw let her prey go and turned to Jaguar. "Wasn't that bunny the most adorable thing ever?!" She shrieked.

"Um.." Jaguar took a step back. "It's our food.."

"Not bunnies, bunnies are too cute to be food." Crimsonpaw turned to watch as the bunny bounded away as quickly as it could. "I will never eat another bunny ever again. Bunnies are friends."

Jaguar sighed and gave her a small nudge, licking her ear tip. "Very well, Crimsonpaw. Bunnies are no longer food to us."

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# Chapter 11

Crimsonpaw was awoken by a loud snore coming from beside her. She lifted her head with a tired sigh and glanced across the dark apprentices den to see Falconpaw on his back with his paws splayed out on either side of him. His jaws hung open and he was snoring loudly.

Flarepaw muttered from Falconpaw's other side. "He needs to stop snoring." The golden she cat gave her brother a hard shove but he continued to snore, not even twitching an ear.

"Flarepaw!" Pebblepaw's deep grumble came from the other side of the den. "Shut your brother up right now!" Crimsonpaw spied the grey tom's glowing green eyes in the darkness and shivered as he turned to glare at her. "What?" He snarled at her.

"Nothing!" Crimsonpaw exclaimed, her voice loud enough to wake Falconpaw.

The black and blue tom snapped awake with a grunt. "What's going on?"

Pebblepaw fumed. "You were snoring!"

Falconpaw let out a nervous chuckle and glanced at the older apprentice. "Sorry."

"Oh you'll be sorry when I get my claws on you!" The grey tom snapped to his paws and marched right up to Falconpaw.

Crimsonpaw watched in tense silence as her brother rose to his paws, lazily shaking his head as if to clear the remainder of his dream from his head. His cobalt blue eyes glared directly into Pebblepaw's pine green ones. The two toms were of equal size, but Falconpaw undoubtedly held the upper-paw because of the little twin blue horns on his head that were angled straight at Pebblepaw's forehead.

A rush of satisfaction filled Crimsonpaw and she grinned as Pebblepaw took a step back from Falconpaw, as if he were immediately regretting his decision to challenge the black and blue tom. But her short-lived satisfaction faded entirely when the grey apprentice turned to look at her. In his green eyes held a promise- a promise that she was in for a beating.

Heavy fear settled within her, not budging even as Falconpaw stood protectively in front of her, shielding her from Pebblepaw's piercing gaze.

"I'm going to eat some breakfast." Flarepaw muttered and strode out of the den, leaving Pebblepaw, Falconpaw and Crimsonpaw to continue their staring contest.

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The blow took her by surprise and Crimsonpaw stumbled into a bush, dropping her rabbit. Her amber eyes darted up to look at her attacker and found herself staring into the eyes of Pebblepaw, Pigeonpaw and Thunderpaw.

Frantically, she stared around the empty moorland for any signs of other cats. Her hope shattered when she realised Pebblepaw had ambushed her in a low dip in the ground. Tall grass surrounded the dip, ensuring nobody could spot her being attacked. She parted her jaws to let out a call for help but a thick grey tail covered her mouth. She squeaked and writhed as Pigeonpaw pinned her down on the ground, the grass tickling her muzzle as her head was forced down.

Pebblepaw snorted as Crimsonpaw relentlessly kicked and flailed against Pigeonpaw and Thunderpaw. "There's no escape, Crimsonpaw. You're stuck here with us."

"Why are you doing this?" Crimsonpaw wailed, her voice muffled by the tail covering her jaws.

"What was that? Didn't hear you." Pebblepaw smirked, deliberately stepping on her dark red tail.

Crimsonpaw bit back a squeal and felt tears brimming in her eyes. She closed her eyes, choking back the tears. *Why won't Pebblepaw just leave me alone?*

"You gonna cry, Crimsonpaw?" Thunderpaw drawled, grinning as he held her forepaws down. "Or should I call you Crimson*kit."*

Crimsonpaw bared her teeth and bit down on Pigeonpaw's tail. The grey tom hissed and lashed his tail away from her mouth. She wasted no time in letting out a shrill cry of help, soon shutting up once Pebblepaw's claws tore at her exposed belly.

"Mouse-brain! Don't you ever learn?" The grey apprentice snarled, scoring his claws deeper into her flesh. She gritted her teeth, forcing down a yelp.

"Pebblepaw!" Crimsonpaw gasped as blood seeped into her fur. "S-Stop!"

"Why? This is fun." Pebblepaw growled. "None of your siblings let us near them, so you have to carry the burden all on your own. Lucky you, huh?"

"But why are you hurting me?" She whimpered, no longer struggling against the three toms.

"You don't belong here in Flameclan. You're a freak and you deserve punishment for skipping around camp thinking that you own the place! Just because you're going to have wings doesn't make you the boss of us normal cats!" Pebblepaw bellowed in frustration, ears flattened to the back of his head.

Crimsonpaw gasped, her tears now rolling freely down her cheeks, as Pebblepaw slashed his claws over her cheek, drawing blood. She awaited the next blow, but she was shocked to see the grey tom fall next to her. A blurr of golden pinned the stocky apprentice down before quickly turning on the other two toms.

The golden blurr was soon identified as Jaguar and Crimsonpaw gasped in surprise and awe as the lithe spotted tom easily herded the three grey toms out of the dip with fierce snarls and growls.

Once the three apprentices fled, Jaguar turned back to Crimsonpaw. A wild gleam shone in his eyes as he helped her up, panting.

"Phew!" Jaguar huffed, his chests heaving. "That was exciting!"

"Jaguar." Crimsonpaw muttered under her breath. "You saved me."

"Mhm." Jaguar nodded, glancing back in the direction Pebblepaw and his littermates disappeared. "Why were they attacking you like that?"

"They think I need to be punished because I'm different." Crimsonpaw sighed, her shoulders sagging as the effects of her wounds settled upon her.

Jaguar let her lean on him. "Fox-hearts! You should really tell someone about what's going on."

"But who do I tell?" Crimsonpaw mumbled hopelessly. "It seems that everyone I know is working against me."

The golden spotted tom frowned and began leading Crimsonpaw back up the hill and into the tall grass. "At least I'm not."

"Yeah..." Crimsonpaw muttered, her head hanging low as she practically dragged her shaky limbs back to camp.

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# Chapter 12

"Jaguar." Frozenstar began from where she sat on the HighRock. "You have chosen to remain in Flameclan and train to one day become a Clan Warrior. From this day on, until you receive your warrior name, you will be known as Jaguarpaw."

Crimsonpaw saw Jaguarpaw's body tremble with excitement from where he was seated at the foot of the HighRock. She couldn't help the delighted smile that met her lips- now they could train together everyday.

"Your mentor will be Honeytail. I hope she will pass down all she knows on to you." Frozenstar concluded with a small smile down at Jaguarpaw.

Honeytail jumped to her paws and trotted to her new apprentice, her tail lashing cheerfully. They touched noses and the clan started to cheer Jaguarpaw's name.

"Jaguarpaw! Jaguarpaw!" Crimsonpaw yowled, her voice most definitely being the loudest.

As the cheering faded, a low growl rumbled in Crimsonpaw's ear. "You and your rogue friend better watch out." She whipped her head to the side to see Pebblepaw was already retreating towards the edge of the crowd.

"That pile of mouse-dung." Crimsonpaw muttered under her breath, flattening her ears. He always had to ruin everything good in her life.

"What was that?" Pinepaw asked, glancing down at her.

Crimsonpaw laughed nervously at the older apprentice. "Oh, nothing.." She put on her best smile.

Pinepaw's whiskers twitched and he rolled his eyes before standing

up. "Only a moon left of your squabbling and then I'll be a warrior." He muttered to himself, padding steadily away.

Crimsonpaw sighed as she watched Pinepaw leave. She didn't even notice Bouncepaw come up behind her until she felt his breath on her ear tips. The red she cat lifted her head and smiled when she saw who was standing behind her. "Bouncepaw!" She spun around and took a step back to see two scaly wings now rested upon her brother's back. They looked identical to their father's wings except they were coloured red. "Wow! Your wings!"

"I know right!" Bouncepaw grinned widely, staring at his wings in admiration. "They're amazing!"

"Can you fly with them?" She wondered excitedly.

"Not yet, but Dad promised he'd give me flying lessons tomorrow!" The red and black tom gave a small, excited bounce. "I'm gonna go show Flarepaw and Falconpaw now!" Then he bounded off in the direction of the fresh-kill pile where their brother and sister sat eating.

Crimsonpaw glanced back to see Jaguarpaw pad up to her. The golden spotted tom was watching Bouncepaw, his crystal blue eyes glued to her brother's new wings. "So you'll be getting ones just like them?"

Crimsonpaw nodded. "I hope I get wings like Mother. The feathers are so soft and warm." She purred, smiling as she imagined what her wings would be like.

"What colour do you think your wings will be?" Jaguarpaw asked, glancing at her.

"Red," She replied, "or maybe a golden amber to match my eyes."

"I think red wings would really suit you." The tom smiled softly and glanced at the camp entrance. "Anyway," he cleared his throat, "how would you like to go to twolegplace with me?"

"Right now?" Crimsonpaw asked, glancing around to see if any of the warriors heard them. Luckily the clearing was quickly emptying

as the cats returned to their patrols. "What if we get in trouble?"

"Come on Crim." Jaguarpaw chuckled. "It'll be fun."

Crimsonpaw forced down a smile at the nickname he used for her and sighed, nodding. "Alright, let's go."

"Great!" Jaguarpaw grinned and began leading her out of camp.

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# Chapter 13

"Hurry up or we'll be late!" Jaguarpaw called from several tail-lengths ahead of Crimsonpaw.

She rolled her eyes and quickened her pace, slipping into the alleyway after him. Her tail fur was spiked in caution, her ears pricked for any sounds of danger. Twolegplace was strange. So many odd scents and sounds. The damp ground underpaw was too hard, it made her pawpads hurt. "Where are we even going?"

"It's a surprise." The golden tom replied, leaping nimbly onto a green twoleg box. Crimsonpaw scrambled up after him, her lip curling at the reek coming from within the box.

"What is this?" She muttered, watching as Jaguarpaw scooted up the wall and onto the windowsill of a twoleg den.

"A twoleg rubbish bin." Jaguarpaw replied. "It's where they put their leftovers."

"Ugh." Crimsonpaw gagged, quickly following him onto the ledge.

"You'd be surprised what you can find in them. I once found a complete fish in there." He chuckled as he led the way to the next windowsill. "It was a bit old, but still tasty."

Crimsonpaw flattened her ears and muttered. "I hate fish."

"You've never tried it." He pointed out.

"I would never want to." She replied with a snort. "It stinks terribly."

"Well I think it's rather delicious." He flicked his spotted tail in her muzzle before bunching his muscles. He pushed off from the ledge and skillfully shimmied up the wall until he reached the roof of the twoleg den, leaving Crimsonpaw staring up at him from where she perched on the ledge.

"Uh... How am I getting up there?" She queried, eyes narrowed.

"The same way I did." Jaguarpaw replied. "Come on, it's not that hard. And I'll catch you if you fall."

Crimsonpaw still didn't feel reassured at all but shook her head and crouched down, readying herself to spring onto the roof. However, just as she was about to jump, there was a shrill meow from below her. "Polka Dot!"

Jaguarpaw glanced down at something below Crimsonpaw and his eyes lit up. "Stripes!"

Crimsonpaw glanced down to see a light ginger she cat with dark stripes running down her back. She had blue eyes that matched Jaguarpaw's exactly. *Who is this?* She wondered. *And what's up with the nicknames?*

Jaguarpaw climbed down from the roof, brushing past Crimsonpaw to leap down to ground level. "What are you doing here?" He wondered, giving the she cat a brief nuzzle.

"My housefolk are away, so I thought I'd sneak out to look for you." She replied, returning the gesture before glancing up at Crimsonpaw. "Who's this?" Her tone of voice sounded slightly protective as she eyed the red she cat.

"This is Crimson." Jaguarpaw meowed, giving Crimsonpaw a silent order not to say anything about being a clan cat. "I met her a few days ago."

"Oh, nice to meet you Crimson." The she cat smiled sweetly. "My name is Tiger. I'm Jaguar's sister."

So that explained their similar eye colour. Crimsonpaw clumsily jumped down so that she stood beside Jaguarpaw. "He never mentioned having a sister." She noted.

"I never had the need to." The golden spotted tom replied, glancing between the two she cats.

Tiger chuckled. "Oh, Dot, always so secretive. Always saying the

bare minimum."

Jaguarpaw rolled his eyes before fully turning to his sister. "Enough with the jokes now. I have something important to tell you."

"And what is that?" Tiger asked, narrowing her eyes.

"I'm not going to be around anymore. I'm going on a trip far from here." Jaguarpaw meowed, his whiskers twitching nervously as he faced his sister.

Crimsonpaw watched the two, not saying a word.

"Why?" Tiger asked simply.

"If I told you you'd hate me." Jaguarpaw sighed, shuffling his paws.

Tiger frowned. "But... You're all I have left.."

"I'm sorry, but I have to leave." Jaguarpaw brushed his nose against her cheek. "That's why I came back today, to say goodbye."

Tiger sniffed, her eyes glistening with fresh tears. "No, please Dot.. don't leave."

"I'm sorry, but the rogue life just isn't for me." He replied.

"Then join me, my housefolk will love you!"

He shook his head. "I'm not housecat either.."

"Then what are you going to do?" Tiger demanded. "Tell me!"

Crimsonpaw felt Tiger's gaze on her and she noticed the striped she cat take a deep sniff at her. Then she gasped. "She's a clan cat! You're joining her clan!"

"No!" Jaguarpaw denied, eyes wide. "I'm not!"

"Don't deny it! I can smell her filth on you! You traitor! Do you remember what happened to Mum and Dad?! How are you so eager to join the cats who killed our parents?" Tiger snarled, her ears flattened.

"It wasn't this clan, they were killed by another clan!" Jaguarpaw hissed.

"They're all the same!" Tiger growled. "Ruthless killers!"

"Hey!" Crimsonpaw hissed. "We're not killers!"

"Shut up, clan scum!" Tiger snarled. "You don't understand!"

Jaguarpaw growled at his sister. "Leave her alone!"

Tiger let out a bark of a laugh. "So now you're on her side now? I bet you're going to kill me now that you're one of them!"

Crimsonpaw bared her teeth. "Shut up!"

Tiger rounded on her, her claws slicing across Crimsonpaw's cheek. She squeaked and backed away in surprise. The striped she cat glared down at her. *Why is everyone so much bigger than me?* Crimsonpaw wondered with an inward sigh.

"You better start running before I slice up more of your pretty little face!" Tiger snarled, her blue eyes blazing in anger.

Crimsonpaw felt her breath hitch in her throat as the kittypet prepared to claw her again, quickly darting away. Jaguarpaw called for her to come back, but Crimsonpaw had already fled from the alleyway, her tail streaming behind her.

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# Chapter 14

"Crimsonpaw!" Jaguarpaw's faint wail sounded somewhere behind her. Crimsonpaw stared around the alleyway she had stopped in, her heart pounding. The sounds of twolegplace roared in her ears, blotting out any other sound or scent. She barely heard Jaguarpaw's voice as he searched the streets for her.

"Crim!" He called again, his voice loud and desperate.

She wished she could answer, but she couldn't find her voice. Crimsonpaw opened her jaws, but no sound came out. Her throat squeezed shut and she choked back a gasp, still panting from her run through twolegplace. She heard Jaguarpaw's call again and decided to run towards his voice. She began trotting along the hard pathway, exiting the alleyway and onto the side of a thunderpath.

Monsters roared by, kicking up foul smelling dust in their wake. Twolegs paced loudly down the hard pathway, their feet causing frightening vibrations through the stone. "Jaguarpaw!" She gasped out, her voice barely a whisper. "Help me!"

She narrowly dodged the feet of a twoleg, scrambling onto the thunderpath. A monster dashed towards Crimsonpaw and she let out a shrill cry, darting to the side. There was a deafening screech of the monster's paws sliding on the thunderpath and the it skidded sideways, right into Crimsonpaw's path again. She squeaked, eyes wide as her whole body tensed up. Just as the monster was nearly ontop of her, it swerved to the other side again, zooming past so quickly that Crimsonpaw fell over.

Her cheek hit the hot, sticky thunderpath and she hissed, scrambling back to her paws to see a twoleg striding straight towards her. She tried to get out of the way but the twoleg's paw gripped onto her scruff, hauling her roughly into the air. She yowled and kicked against the twoleg. "No! Put me down!" She cried.

She was carried by the scruff into a less busy part of twolegplace where she was tossed into a wire mesh cage. Crimsonpaw clawed at the cage. "No! No! No!" She wailed. "Let me out!" Her yowls were answered by a harsh bark from the twoleg and their large pale paw slammed onto the top of her cage, jolting it. She grew quiet. Her amber eyes were wide, her heart pounding erratically in her chest. She was petrified.

*Why did I let Jaguarpaw take me here? This place is evil!* She tried to move, but her body was frozen solid.

"Hey! You!" A tom's voice sounded beside her.

"Jaguarpaw?" She whispered hopefully, turning to see a white and grey dappled tom sitting in a cage similar to her's. She sighed in disappointment.

The tom chuckled. He looked no older than her, his blue eyes watching her. "My name's Cloud. What's your name?"

"Cr-Crimson..." She breathed, staring around to look for an escape. She didn't want to say that she was from the clans. She didn't want Cloud to have the same reaction Tiger did.

"There's no escape from here." Cloud muttered, his gaze lingering on her pelt. "How'd a kittypet such as yourself get caught on the streets? Don't you have housefolk?"

"What makes you think I'm a kittypet?" She curled her lip in disgust.

"Your pelt... It's too beautiful and thick to be from a rogue or loner." Cloud meowed.

"I'm no kittypet!" Crimsonpaw hissed and lashed her tail.

"Odd.." Cloud shrugged. "So you're a fellow rogue then?"

"...Yes."

"Huh, well you should consider yourself lucky, you seem to have had a good life up until this point. Well fed, clean fur.. I'd give a lot for a life with those kind of rewards." He laughed. "Anyway, you

had better start praying to the light, because this is where we will die."

"Is everything a joke to you?" She hissed in reply.

"No."

Crimsonpaw sighed heavily and pricked her ears when she saw a pair of familiar blue eyes flash in the corner of her eye. She turned but saw nothing. *Jaguarpaw?* She clung to the last string of hope that the golden spotted tom had found her and was going to rescue her.

Suddenly there was a pained yowl from where she cat seen Jaguarpaw's eyes flash by. The twoleg's head perked up and glanced in the direction of the yowl before walking towards it. As the twoleg investigated the sound, Crimsonpaw saw Jaguarpaw creep stealthily through the shadows, easily keeping hidden among the twoleg items strewn about the place.

Jaguarpaw climbed up to where Crimsonpaw's cage was and breathed. "Looks like you're losing the bet."

"What bet?" She growled.

"The one about getting into the least amount of trouble before our warrior ceremonies." The golden tom smirked as he managed to unlock her cage.

Crimsonpaw rolled her eyes and darted out of the cage, brushing her muzzle against his. "Thank Starclan you're here."

Jaguarpaw purred in reply and flung open Cloud's cage as well. "Let's go!" He yowled.

The apprentice's yowl alerted the twoleg to their presence and they let out a snarl, lunging for the three young cats. Jaguarpaw slid down onto the ground and darted away with Crimsonpaw quickly following. Cloud ran off in the opposite direction.

Once the twoleg's angry yowls faded into the ongoing drone of twolegplace, Jaguarpaw slowed the pace to a quick trot. "So how

was that for your first trip here?"

"Never going back. Ever." Crimsonpaw muttered in reply.

"Sounds fair."

---

# Chapter 15

Their return to camp just as the sun set behind the moorland hills went mostly unnoticed, save for Wishberry giving them odd looks as she stalked past them into her den.

Jaguarpaw made a beeline for the fresh-kill pile, hungrily snatching up a squirrel to eat. Crimsonpaw followed more slowly, favouring her left forepaw which had somehow been hurt at one point during her mad rush through twolegplace. She settled down next to the golden tom and took a bite from his squirrel. He stifled a low growl of annoyance but let her share with him.

"Crimsonpaw!" Bouncepaw yowled from across the clearing, trotting up to them. His wings flailed above him and he wobbled slighlty as he came to a stop. It seemed he was still getting used to the new wings on his back. "Where did you go? I was looking everywhere for you!"

"Oh." Crimsonpaw blinked in surprise. She hadn't realised Bouncepaw would actually care to look for her. "Uh, we were just out hunting."

"Where? I searched the whole territory.." Bouncepaw suddenly leaned down and sniffed her pelt. He reeled back with a gasp. "Twolegplace?!" He whisper-yelled. "Are you kidding me? You could get banished for this!"

"Really?" Crimsonpaw gulped and glanced at Jaguarpaw, who shrugged nonchalantly.

"I should tell Frozenstar." At those words, Crimsonpaw leapt to her paws and prepared to argue with her brother, but he quickly added. "But I won't."

"Phew." Crimsonpaw sighed in relief and lay back down.

Bouncepaw chuckled and glanced behind his shoulder to see

Falconpaw and Flarepaw emerge from the apprentices den. Pinepaw strolled out after them as they headed to the fresh-kill pile. Crimsonpaw looked around for Pebblepaw and his siblings, but they were nowhere to be found. *Good.*

She was suddenly encircled by Falconpaw's warmth. The black and blue tom had his paws around her, his head resting atop hers. "Crimsonpaw, you're back. Where were you?" Crimsonpaw sat there awkwardly, not sure how to react to the strange and sudden affection.

"They were in twolegplace." Bouncepaw whispered excitedly.

"What?!" Falconpaw released her from the hug and turned her around to face him. "Twolegplace?" He hissed, turning his gaze to glare at Jaguarpaw accusingly.

Jaguarpaw shrugged, but didn't meet the other tom's gaze. "We did some exploring in twolegplace. Problem?"

"Twolegplace is forbidden!" Falconpaw growled at Jaguarpaw. "But I wouldn't expect a former rogue like yourself to understand."

Crimsonpaw felt her tail lash in spite. "Falconpaw!" She snarled. "Shut up!"

Falconpaw paused and looked back at her, his blue eyes softening by a fraction. "What?"

"Do not insult my friend." Crimsonpaw growled.

Her brother narrowed his eyes at Jaguarpaw before turning back to her. "I'm only looking out for you. There's no need to get defensive."

"I'm an apprentice now, I don't need you to look after me all the time." Crimsonpaw hated that she was always viewed as the runt who couldn't handle herself. Why couldn't they just leave her alone?

Flarepaw tugged on Falconpaw's tail. "Come on, do as she says. Leave her alone." The golden she cat flashed Crimsonpaw a soft grin. "It won't be long before she realises her mistake and comes wailing back to us."

Falconpaw let out a soft sigh and allowed Flarepaw to drag him away to the other end of the clearing. Bouncepaw trotted after them, his wings flailing clumsily as he tried to fly there. Pinepaw had disappeared back into the den to sleep.

Crimsonpaw rested her head on her paws with a tired sigh. She tensed as she felt Jaguarpaw lean closer to her, but eventually embraced his warmth and let her body relax against his, closing her eyes.

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Bright light shone in her eyes and Crimsonpaw peeled open her amber eyes to see the early morning sun glaring down at her. She lifted her head, blinking away the sleep from her eyes, to see Jaguarpaw was still asleep beside her. The half-eaten remains of the squirrel still lay before them. She turned back to the sun- it was past dawn. The main clearing was oddly quiet, however. She guessed the dawn patrol had left already and everyone else was still asleep.

Frozenstar's appearance from the leader's den made Crimsonpaw's body go rigid. Especially when the white and grey dappled she cat turned her ice blue eyes to her. She stared up at her mentor as she strolled across the clearing to her.

"Crimsonpaw, I want you to do some more solo hunting today." The leader meowed.

Crimsonpaw sat up, stretched and looked back up at her leader with pleading eyes. She dared to ask. "When will we do some more battle training?"

"When I think you're ready for it." Frozenstar snapped, her eyes narrowing further. "Now off you go. I want you to bring back at least something this time."

Crimsonpaw growled faintly and stood up, stomping out of camp. Her fur was still a mess from sleep, but she would sort that out later. All she wanted to do at that moment in time was get away from her mentor. Then she'd deal with everything else.

_____

It was a cool windy day. Perfect weather for sitting on the top of a tall hill overlooking Flameclan and Magiclan's vast moorland and beyond. Crimsonpaw breathed in the scents of her territory, her amber eyes searching the misty mountains far in the distance. She wondered if she would ever explore those mountains. Maybe once she got her wings she could.

In the far distance, she caught sight of a dot of a feline striding through the tall grass. She pricked her ears and watched the cat. They looked small, like a kit, their fur dark and blending with the shadows. She wondered who the cat was, where he was going, why he was alone.

With a sigh, she turned, sniffing the air for prey with a sigh. But as she took her second step, pain erupted in her back and she collapsed on the ground. She felt rippling under her skin and her whole body went stiff as she realised what was happening.

"My wings!" She choked back a gasp of fear as the pain grew worse and she seized up on the ground.

_____

# Chapter 16

Her wails travelled far across the moorland, but it didn't seem far enough for anyone to notice. It seemed like ages Crimsonpaw lay alone in absolute agony. Now she knew why Bouncepaw had yowled so much when he got his wings.

Finally, she saw a cat in the distance. As they drew closer, she recognised him as Jaguarpaw. She let out a wheeze of relief as the golden spotted tom reached her side with a soft yowl of worry.

"What's going on?" The tom demanded, his eyes wide as he peered down at her.

Crimsonpaw cried out. "M-my wings!" She screwed her eyes shut as another wave of pain rushed through her, pulsing through her back and shoulders. "Help me!"

Jaguarpaw seemed lost. He stood by her side, utterly still. "What do I do? How do I stop the pain?"

Crimsonpaw's mind was too hazy with pain to fully process his words. She let out a scream of pain as it worsened for a heartbeat, then died down again to a dull throb. Jaguarpaw seemed to be shaken up by her scream and he muttered to himself. "Poppy seeds! That will help!"

His pawsteps thudded loudly along the ground as he pelted away in search of poppy seeds. Crimsonpaw barely registered the apprentice's disappearance, her jaws opened wide in a cry for help.

He returned quickly and a pawful of small seeds were shoved in her face. Through her tear-blurred sight, Crimsonpaw managed to find the poppy seeds and take a few in her mouth. As the herbs slid down her throat, she suddenly had a flashback.

*Wishberry took out some poppy seeds but Obsidianpelt shook his head. "**He can't take herbs during this ordeal, it may affect the way his***

***wings emerge."***

Crimsonpaw tried to cough the seeds back up but they had already made their way into her system. Fresh, cold tears rolled down her cheeks as she realised what a terrible mistake she had just made. Jaguarpaw's paw ran along her back but she didn't feel it. Everything was growing strangely numb. Eventually, the only thing she could feel was her own heart thundering out of control in her chest. The only sound was the rush of blood roaring in her ears. The only smell was the soil brushing against her muzzle. The only taste were the remains of the poppy seeds.

The whole outside world faded to nothing, the only thing she sensed was her own body, which was slowly growing more and more numb as the seconds passed.

And then a sudden darkness overtook her vision.

---

Crimsonpaw awoke in the moorland.

It didn't take long for her to notice the strange pile of what looked like blood-covered ash sitting beside her.

Her whole body was numb. She couldn't feel anything. She wondered for a heartbeat if she had died, but then her senses slowly returned to her and she caught sight of Jaguarpaw sitting anxiously nearby. When he saw that she was awake, he stood up and rushed to her side.

"Oh Crimsonpaw I'm so sorry!" He cried, his crystal blue eyes shimmering with tears. "I did this to you!"

"What did you do?" Crimsonpaw asked softly, her gaze slowly travelling to her back.

There were two slices in the space between her shoulders, where her wings were supposed to be. But there was nothing. Just those two holes in her back, dark red blood crusting around them.

Crimsonpaw choked back a wail. "Where are my wings?"

"When y-you were blacked out..." Jaguarpaw whispered, his face screwed up with guilt. "Your wings came.. They were beautiful. Red feathered wings..." He drifted off and Crimsonpaw saw tears roll down his cheeks as he struggled to find the words for what happened next. "And then.. The wings turned black... and disintegrated.." His gaze dropped to the ash that lay beside her.

Crimsonpaw stared at the ash. "So.. My wings are.." She whimpered. "Gone? Forever?"

Jaguarpaw nodded faintly. "I'm so sorry!" He dropped to his knees. "I did this! I'm sorry! Please forgive me!"

She continued to stare at the ash, her amber eyes wide. "But.. I can't have lost my wings that easily... Please tell me this isn't true.." There was no reply and Crimsonpaw felt tears form in her eyes. "No!" She wailed. "No! My wings!"

*I'll never have my wings! They're gone!* Crimsonpaw buried her face in her paws and let out a low, mournful cry. *I'm such a fool!*

She peeked open her tearful eyes slightly as the wind picked up around them, the ash quickly being carried away with it. Crimsonpaw leapt to her paws to stop the ash. "No!" She scrsmbled to stop the wind from taking away what was left of her wings but it was impossible. The breeze easily carried away the ashes, taking them high into the air, swirling out of sight into the clouds.

Crimsonpaw collapsed back on the ground, sobbing and crying, her body shuddering and shaking.

Jaguarpaw whimpered softly beside her, and he found the strength to shuffle closer and rested his muzzle against her forehead. "It's okay Crim.." He whispered. "You're okay.. Everything is alright."

Crimsonpaw cried and wailed into her paws, not even acknowledging his soothing words.

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**Random fact: There was a shampoo bottle sitting beside me while I was editing this.**

**C:**

# Chapter 17

After what seemed like moons of pathetic sobbing and wailing, the two apprentices fell into a restless sleep in the moorland, the cold night wind pummelling them as they rested.

When Crimsonpaw woke up, her body was stiff from the cold. Frost lay around them- leaf-bare was approaching. The sun was still low in the sky, only just peeking out from behind the hills of Flameclan territory.

She could see the border patrol several tree-lengths away as they headed to the Magiclan border. They didn't notice her. None of them had heard her wails yesterday; or maybe they just didn't care.

Jaguarpaw was still sound asleep beside her, his body pressed against hers for warmth. Crimsonpaw snuck a glance at her back. It was still bare. For a heartbeat she had hoped that it had all been a bad dream, but the two slits proved otherwise.

With a soft sigh, Crimsonpaw rose to her paws, wincing as her muscles and joints screamed from the movement. She wobbled to a standing position and began stretching her tired limbs, yawning to shake away the tiredness. Her movement woke Jaguarpaw up.

The golden spotted tom sat up with a soft sigh. "So. How are you?"

"Fine." Was her reply.

Jaguarpaw seemed unsatisfied with her lie, but didn't push on the subject. Instead he shuffled closer to her and gave her forehead a comforting lick. "It'll be okay. You don't need wings, you are already perfect in every way."

Crimsonpaw felt a smile rise on her lips and she murmured. "Thank you Jaguarpaw."

"Just remember that I'll always be here for you." He replied, licking

her again before stepping away and clearing his throat. "Now, Frozenstar will probably be wondering where we are..."

"Then let's hunt first so that it makes it look like we did something useful." Crimsonpaw sighed and looked around the empty moorland.

"Are you okay to hunt?" Jaguarpaw queried.

Crimsonpaw moved her shoulders around. Her back throbbed, but it wasn't agonising. When she returned to camp she'd get Wishberry to give her some herbs. But then she remembered that herbs had been the cause of her loss. She wondered if she would be able to take herbs without breaking into tears.

"Crim?"

Crimsonpaw looked up to see Jaguarpaw watching her worriedly. "I'm fine." She reassured. "Come on, let's hunt."

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They caught one rabbit between the two of them. Jaguarpaw had been the one to actually catch it, Crimsonpaw had started the chase but then collapsed in a panting heap barely seconds into the hunt.

Upon returning to camp, nobody greeted them. Nobody noticed anything out of the ordinary.

Crimsonpaw kept her gaze stuck on the ground, the two slices on her back beginning to throb the more she thought about her lost wings. She would never get to fly. Never. Plus, her parents would probably hate her for losing her wings. It would definitely give Solarflare a chance to push her down further to become a medicine cat. And Pebblepaw... He would love to gibe her about her loss.

"Crim, come on." Jaguarpaw's tail wrapped around her foreleg, tugging her with him in the direction of the medicine den. She didn't resist, letting the spotted tom lead her there.

They padded into the dark, shadowed den, the sharp tang of herbs immediately attacking Crimsonpaw's senses. She glanced up to see

Wishberry sorting herbs at the back of the den. When Jaguarpaw cleared his throat, the medicine cat looked up and smiled. "Oh hello, what brings you here?"

"Crimsonpaw has an injury." Jaguarpaw meowed, glancing back at Crimsonpaw with a frown. "On her back."

"Oh dear, what happened?" Wishberry stood up and grabbed some cobwebs before padding to Crimsonpaw's side. She stopped short when she saw where the wound was placed. "That's odd..." She leaned down to look at Crimsonpaw. Crimsonpaw looked away.

"What happened?" The medicine cat asked, examining the slices closer.

"Um..." Crimsonpaw couldn't find her voice and tears were threatening to spill.

Luckily, Jaguarpaw answered for her. "We had a problem with her wings..."

"Her wings?!" Wishberry gasped and pulled back. "When?"

"Yesterday." Crimsonpaw finally found her voice. She shivered at the coldness of her own voice. "Did none of you hear my yowls?"

Wishberry wasn't listening, she had left the den. Once she returned, Solarflare and Obsidianpelt were in tow. Crimsonpaw sank lower to the ground as her parents gazes fixed on her back.

"Your wings are gone?" Solarflare muttered, horrified. Crimsonpaw managed a faint nod as the tears began slipping down her cheeks again.

Obsidianpelt's breath warmed the back of her head as he leaned closer to his crying daughter. "What did you do?" His voice was low and demanding. It sent Crimsonpaw into a fit of loud sobs.

"I fed her poppy seeds." Came Jaguarpaw's soft whisper. "I didn't know..."

"You what?!" Obsidianpelt turned his attention to the spotted

apprentice. "You're the cause of this tragedy? You should be sentenced to death for this! Do you know how precious a cat's wings are to them?"

"If wings are so precious, then why did none of you come when she was writhing on the ground in agony?" Jaguarpaw suddenly snarled, his claws digging into the ground near Crimsonpaw's muzzle as she cried into the ground.

"We heard something, but Pebblepaw reasurred us it was just an injured bird that he could see from where he sat on watch!" Her father hissed at Jaguarpaw. "You filthy rogue, you fed her those poppy seeds on purpose didn't you?"

"I didn't!" Jaguarpaw hissed back, tail lashing. "She was in pain, I panicked."

Crimsonpaw's loud sob interrupted the argument. Her tears had wet the ground beneath her and her body shuddered as the cries ripped through her. She quieted down when Solarflare nipped her ear gently. "Hush." Her mother ordered sharply.

The argument between her father and her friend kicked up again a moment after. Obsidianpelt took a threatening step closer to the smaller apprentice. "You are no longer allowed anywhere near my daughter, you understand?" His wings were splayed out on either side of him, his blue eyes blazing. From what Crimsonpaw could see through her tear-blurred eyes, her father looked terrifying.

Jaguarpaw growled fiercely, but ducked his head in submission. "You can't keep me away for long." He promised before darting out of the den.

Obsidianpelt snarled and turned back to Crimsonpaw. She closed her eyes as his blue eyes grazed over her injured back. "Disgraceful." Her father muttered angrily and turned to Wishberry. "Don't give her herbs, she doesn't deserve to be healed for such a foolish act."

Solarflare opened her mouth to object, but Obsidianpelt gave her a firm look and she nodded before hissing. "Go to your nest,

Crimsonpaw. And don't come out of that den until you have thought about what you've just done to yourself."

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# Chapter 18

Her nest was wet with her tears. Her sobs echoed around the empty den, her pitiful crying seemed to keep out any unwanted visitors.

It was well past sunhigh when Crimsonpaw finally fell into a restless sleep, tossing and turning as nightmares haunted her.

When she awoke, her eyes were sticky with dried tears. It was night-time, the den was dark. Around her, she caught sight of her siblings sleeping shapes in their nests. Across the den was Pebblepaw and his siblings. At the centre, warmed up by all the sleeping bodies around him, was the eldest apprentice Pinepaw.

Standing up, Crimsonpaw nearly fell over as her limbs failed to work, but she managed to waddle awkwardly out of the den and into the dark, empty clearing.

Where was Jaguarpaw? He wasn't in the den.

Crimsonpaw scanned around camp with her eyes, finding no signs of the familiar spotted tom. "Hm..." She murmured, suddenly tensing when she heard movement inside the apprentices den.

Pebblepaw emerged and let out a soft snort as he saw her. "Going out on an adventure, Wingless? It's a shame you can't fly, I guess you're stuck on the ground like the rest of us."

He neared her but she scooted away. "Go away." She muttered, ears flattened. She wasn't in the mood to have to deal with him.

He wrapped a paw around her, roughly tugging her closer to him. "Now, where are you off to?"

She slithered out of his grip. "None of your business."

"Ha!" He laughed. "Would you prefer it if I woke up your parents and told them you're out of the den?"

"No!" She whisper-yelled. "Don't you dare!" She hated that Pebblepaw had her at his command, it made her feel so powerless and weak.

"Fine, then I'm coming with you, wherever you're going." Pebblepaw smirked and gave her a shove. "Go on, lead the way."

"Will you attack me again once we're out of camp?" Crimsonpaw queried, glaring at him. She wouldn't put it past him to attack her again.

"I guess you'll have to find that out." The bigger tom shrugged and gave her another hard push towards the camp exit. "Come on."

Crimsonpaw let out a warning growl which was swiftly answered by a harsh snarl in her ear. "Would you prefer it if I tore your whiskers out right now?"

She didn't reply and instead hurried out of camp, her pawsteps silent on the moorland. Pebblepaw followed less quietly after her, his tail kicking up dust as he went.

Crimsonpaw wondered why Pebblepaw wanted to accompany her. What was going on in his mind now? She sighed. He was alone, so if he attacked her again she'd have a good chance at escaping.

The cool moorland breeze pulled at their pelts as the two apprentices padded through Flameclan's dark, empty territory. Luckily the nearly-full moon shone down on them, giving them full sight of the space around them.

There were no signs of Jaguarpaw. The golden spotted tom had vanished. Did he leave Flameclan territory to return to twolegplace? A spark of anger coursed through Crimsonpaw at the thought. Why were her parents so mean? Just because she lost her wings doesn't mean that they had any right to punish her or her friend.

Pebblepaw was suddenly by her side, his uncomfortably hot breath fanning her ear tips. "So."

"So.. what?" Crimsonpaw muttered, shuffling a good tail-length away from the grey tom.

"I bet you and Jaguarpaw are a thing." The older apprentice smirked at her, his pine green eyes glittering in the night.

Crimsonpaw's tail lashed and she glared at Pebblepaw. "Never in a million moons." She hissed, flustered by the sudden statement.

Pebblepaw's smirk only widened.

The red furred she cat chose not to think about it for any longer. Otherwise she'd be sitting in the moorland for days, contemplating her future. She turned back to face the distance where the blinding twolegplace lights lit up the sky like a beacon. "Why did you follow me here, Pebblepaw?"

Pebblepaw approached her again and she backed away. He laughed with sick joy. "I trained you well."

Crimsonpaw snarled furiously at the tom. "I'll show you training!"

"Not well enough, it seems." Pebblepaw meowed thoughtfully. "Perhaps you need more."

"Enough!" Came a low growl from behind them and Crimsonpaw spun around to see Jaguarpaw's crystal blue eyes came into view as he neared the two. "Leave her alone!"

Pebblepaw grinned at Jaguarpaw. "Come to save the day, rogue?" He took a step closer to Crimsonpaw and she held her ground. "Ooo, you've found some bravery now, Wingless? Won't take long to get rid of that."

Jaguarpaw snarled and stepped in front of Crimsonpaw, shielding her from the older tom. "Back off!"

Crimsonpaw kept her mouth shut, she didn't want anything bad to happen because of her.

Pebblepaw tapped the ground with a forepaw, a slight chuckle escaping his lips. "Say that again." He dared.

"Stay away from Crimsonpaw." Jaguarpaw spat in a low voice, crystal blue flames of anger dancing in his eyes.

Pebblepaw raised a paw threateningly, his claws unsheathed. Jaguarpaw stood his around in front of Crimsonpaw, refusing to back down. The older grey tom let out a snort and lowered his paw. "Fools." Then he spun around and stalked off in the other direction towards Lightclan territory.

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# Chapter 19

A yowl ripped through the air, making both Jaguarpaw and Crimsonpaw freeze in place. A second yowl followed the first one, a yowl filled with agony and fear. The two apprentices immediately raced in the direction of the howls, their eyes searching the early morning darkness for the source.

They finally made it to the scene and Crimsonpaw gasped in surprise when she saw the russet pelt of a fox writhing ontop of Pebblepaw. The apprentice snarled and kicked viciously at the fox but he couldn't dislodge the larger enemy's jaws from his chest. He spotted Crimsonpaw and Jaguarpaw and gasped out. "Help me!"

They both hesitated, their tails lashing behind them. Crimsonpaw didn't want to help the grey tom. He had hurt her so many times over, this was a suitable punishment. But the more caring side of her reminded Crimsonpaw that this would mean his death, and she didn't want to live with blood on her paws.

As the fox tore at Pebblepaw's chest, Crimsonpaw and Jaguarpaw watched, still deciding what to do.

At last, Jaguarpaw hissed and dove for the fox, but Crimsonpaw stuck her paw in the way. "No." She muttered, voice cool. "He deserves this. He needs to die." She was sick of all the insults he threw at her every day. She was tired of the abuse. It was time to end it.

Jaguarpaw stared at Crimsonpaw. "But.. You can't just leave Pebblepaw to die.. It would be cruel, heartless."

"He deserves this!" Crimsonpaw shrieked, her voice tight with desperation, cracking at the end of her sentence. "He needs to die!" Maybe then she would be able to live a normal life. *I will be free from him.*

"Crimson..." The golden spotted tom murmured. "What's wrong?"

"Pebblepaw is the reason I'm so weak!" She snarled. "He pushes me down every day! He must die!"

"You're not weak." Jaguarpaw insisted. "Please Crimsonpaw we have to save him, I won't let you live with the guilt of killing him."

"I'm not killing him." She snapped. "The fox is doing that for me!"

Pebblepaw let out a howl of agony as his blood pooled around him. "Please!" He wailed. "I promise I'll never annoy you again! Please just help me!"

Jaguarpaw pushed against Crimsonpaw's hold, easily breaking free from her weak grip. "We have to do something."

"Fine, I'll do something." Crimsonpaw muttered and turned away, stalking in the other direction.

"Where are you going?" Jaguarpaw called.

"I'm leaving him to die." She hissed. "Now unless you want to join him in the fox's jaws, I suggest you follow me."

As she walked away, she listening to Pebblepaw's agonised wails and a strange feeling settled within her. She tried to figure out what it was. The feeling was a cold feeling. A foreign feeling she had never felt before. It chilled her to the bone.

Crimsonpaw welcomed the new, strange feeling as Pebblepaw's yowls abruptly ended.

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Crimsonpaw found herself heading towards the far borderline between Flameclan and Monsterclan. The enemy clan's forest stretched high above her head, making her feel even smaller than she already was.

Jaguarpaw sat a few tail-lengths away, his head low. "I can't believe we left him." He was muttering, his voice hoarse.

Crimsonpaw felt a twinge of guilt toward the golden spotted tom.

She hadn't meant to be so rude to him, he was just the only avaliable cat she could relieve her stress to.

Slowly, she turned away from Monsterclan territory to look at Jaguarpaw. His body drooped tiredly, the dark atmosphere of night time making his fur look almost black. Crimsonpaw stood up and walked to his side, pressing her fur against his. "I'm sorry."

"What happened to you?" Jaguarpaw whispered, his crystal blue eyes searching her face.

"I don't know. I panicked.." She sighed and flattened her ears. "I was just so scared of Pebblepaw that I thought the only way to stop the fear would be to kill him."

"And now he is dead. How will we explain it to the clan?" Jaguarpaw murmured.

"We won't." She hissed faintly. "We were never there. Pebblepaw was alone when he was attacked and he was alone as he died. We were sleeping here all along."

Jaguarpaw trailed his paw slowly across the ground. "Alright..." He seemed uncertain, but Crimsonpaw knew he wouldn't say a word to anyone.

"Let's stay here for a bit and nap until sunrise." Crimsonpaw meowed, settling down beside the tom. She didn't want to go back to camp and face more of her parents rejection or the jeers and comments that cats would throw at her for losing her wings.

Jaguarpaw nodded and rolled onto his side, his back pressing firmly against hers, soothing the throbbing the two slices on her back had left.

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# Chapter 20

Someone tapped her forehead and Crimsonpaw snapped awake to see Flarepaw's narrowed yellow eyes looking at her. She sat up abruptly, nearly falling over as a wave of dizziness wracked her tired, achy body.

Flarepaw muttered from where she stood before her. "How are you?"

Crimsonpaw sighed, looking away from her sister to the Monsterclan borderline. On her other side, Jaguarpaw was still sound asleep. "I'm fine." The red she cat whispered faintly.

"You're not fine." Flarepaw murmured, sitting down. "You're in pain."

"No I'm not."

"Not physically," her sister reached forwards and pressed her warm nose to Crimsonpaw's forehead. The slices on her back throbbed even more.

The golden she cat sat back and glanced behind Crimsonpaw's shoulder. "Bouncepaw and Falconpaw are here." She announced quietly. "Mother and father have told us all not to go near you, but we had to see how you were doing."

Crimsonpaw sighed as she was trapped between her two brothers. Their warm, dark pelts pressed all around her and she sank into their embrace with closed eyes. Bouncepaw's wings curled around her and he nuzzled her ear. Falconpaw gave her forehead a healthy amount of licks.

Finally, the two toms pulled away. Crimsonpaw found herself falling onto the ground as soon as the support disappeared. Falconpaw nosed her back to her paws before murmuring. "You'll be okay, Crimson."

Crimsonpaw still refused to speak, her eyes stuck on the ground. She wondered if anyone had spotted Pebblepaw's body yet. She wondered what the clan thought of her stupid mistake with her wings. But... She also didn't want to know; quite a large part of her wanted to run away from her life. Maybe she could throw herself onto the thunderpath and swiftly end her existence. Surely death would be easier than braving the terrors of life.

However, Crimsonpaw knew she had to keep going. For her siblings, for her clan, for Jaguarpaw. She had to fight through the pain, the grief and suffering. Then she would be a strong Flameclan warrior. She would prove everyone wrong. Crimsonpaw would be strong, not weak. Her name would be spoken of by the elders in the future, her story of bravery told to kits in the moons following her eventual death.

Her daydreaming was cut off when Jaguarpaw woke up with a soft, tired groan. The spotted tom rolled onto his other side with a yawn, looking up at the four siblings. "Uh.. Hai?"

Falconpaw sighed faintly and rolled his eyes. "Hello."

Jaguarpaw lowered his head slightly at the negative aura he was receiving from Crimsonpaw's siblings. They must've known about how he fed her the poppy seeds that caused her wing loss. Crimsonpaw felt torn between siding with her siblings or Jaguarpaw. She didn't want either of them to be upset, but she didn't know what to do. So she kept quiet.

"How was your rest?" Jaguarpaw asked, stretching a bit.

"Good." Crimsonpaw lied smoothly. She had actually ended up having a nightmare during her sleep, but she didn't dare mention it. She hated lying so much, but she didn't want them to worry. It wasn't like they could do anything to help her problems.

Bouncepaw wrapped his paws around Crimsonpaw. "Can you come back to camp with us? The clan misses you."

It took all of her self-control not to snort at that comment. *The clan misses you.* What a bunch of fox-dung.

Eventually, she took a deep breath and murmured softly. "Alright, let's go.."

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They arrived at camp to see the clan was gathered at the Highrock. Frozenstar stood proudly atop the large boulder, her ice blue eyes shining in the pale morning sunlight. "Today, we welcome Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot as full warriors of Flameclan." The ceremony concluded, the clan cheering for the two new warriors. *Has anyone noticed Pebblepaw's strange disappearance?*

Crimsonpaw turned to walk into the apprentices den when she heard Frozenstar speak again. "And now we mourn for a brave warrior who lost his life last night. Pebble*fur* will be welcomed into Starclan as a full warrior."

She gasped. They had already found Pebblepaw? Why hadn't her siblings mentioned anything? Crimsonpaw looked at Bouncepaw and Falconpaw as they padded to her side. "You already found his body?"

"You knew already?" Falconpaw blinked, his blue eyes narrowing at her.

"Uh... No!" Crimsonpaw squeaked, darting away to leave the conversation but her brother's spiked tail held her back.

"What are you not telling us?" Her brother demanded, his voice deadly quiet so that they didn't bring attention to themselves in the crowded clearing.

"Nothing." Crimsonpaw hissed, pushing against Falconpaw. He wouldn't budge.

"Crimsonpaw." Falconpaw hissed. "Tell me what you did. Now!"

Crimsonpaw flinched at the harshness of his voice and backed away, afraid Falconpaw would hurt her. She stumbled into Obsidianpelt. Her father gave her a hard glare and she cowered into the ground, her amber eyes wide and fearful.

"Crimsonpaw." Bouncepaw waved his paw in her face and she reeled backwards, turning to her black and red brother. "What's wrong?"

"N-Nothing!" She gasped out before taking off out of camp, away from the glares of hatred and unwanted questions.

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# Chapter 21

She pelted through the moorland, vaguely aware of pawsteps behind her. She slowed down slightly as she neared The Cliff, realising that whoever was following her would end up cornering her. As she swerved to the side, away from The Cliff, she caught sight of her pursuers. Her heart caught in her throat as she stared at them. *No.*. Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot trotted towards her, their eyes narrowed in determination.

"What are you doing here?" She forced her voice to be strong as she faced the two older toms as they slowed to a stop a few tail-lengths away.

"You killed Pebblepaw." Thunderfoot snarled, his eyes narrowed and claws out. "We saw you last night as you and that rogue left him to die!"

"And now you're going to pay!" Pigeonfeather screeched, darting towards her. Crimsonpaw shrieked and lunged away from the grey tom, scrambling to escape. She barely made it three pawsteps before claws latched into her haunches and dragged her back.

Crimsonpaw screeched and lashed out at her attacker, missing by a great length. *I hate Frozenstar for not teaching me how to fight! I'm so weak!* She flailed as Pigeonfeather pinned her down and Thunderfoot's claws dragged across her side. She yowled in pain, closing her eyes as blood welled up in her fur. "S-stop! I didn't kill him!"

"You left him to die! We saw you!" Thunderfoot snarled and dug his claws deep into her chest. She shrieked, Pigeonfeather's tail quickly muffling her voice.

Crimsonpaw struggled feebly against the two toms. No matter how hard she tried, she could not get free. *Why do they hurt me like this?* She had expected her troubles to go away as soon as Pebblepaw took his last breath, but it seemed it wasn't his fault she was such a

failure. She really was just that bad. *So weak. So powerless.* She gritted her teeth as Thunderfoot sank his teeth into her soft belly, tearing viciously at her flesh.

Why had Starclan cursed her to be like this? Was it because she was a descendent of the tribe? Were they not meant to be in a clan?

She let out a low wail of agony as claws sliced through her hind legs, blood spraying on the ground. "Stop!" Crimsonpaw gasped, her voice barely audible through the thick grey tail that covered her jaws. "P-please stop." Her struggles had faded to nothing, her only movement being her weak jerks as Thunderfoot and Pigeonfeather attacked her.

It seemed to go on forever. A dark pool of blood surrounded her. Her amber eyes were dull with pain, her body limp from exhaustion and breathing ragged in her chest. Her eyes were drooping closed as darkness threatened to take a hold of her. It seemed that the two toms had grown tired to clawing at her and instead sat back to watch her slowly bleed onto the ground.

"This is what you get for killing our brother." Thunderfoot growled, his claws sinking into the blood-stained ground.

Crimsonpaw let out a faint cry of pain- a final plea for mercy. The two laughed, shaking their heads.

"You're going to die here." Pigeonfeather grinned and stood up. "Let's go, she should be dead soon."

Crimsonpaw watched the two toms stride away before turning to look up at the sky. It hurt even to move her eyes and she let out a low whimper, blood dripping from the side of her mouth. It was already sunhigh. How time flew when you were getting brutally abused.

She deserved it though. She *had* killed Pebblepaw. She would never forgive herself for it. This was the kind of demise she deserved.

Darkness threatened to take her, and she waited happily for the sweet relief from the pain.

After what seemed like moons of waiting, her eyes finally fell closed and the cool, inky blackness surrounded her.

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Crimsonpaw drifted into consciousness once again.

She was in a cold place, her body already chilled to the bone.

Strangely, there was no breeze tugging at her fur- something that never occurred in Flameclan territory.

She breathed in, her chest aching as she did so. The smell of death surrounded her.

*Where am I?*

Crimsonpaw dared to peek on single eye open, and when she did she wished she hadn't because standing before her was a pure white furred feline. The cat was wrapped in darkness, shadows coating most of her pelt. Through the black mist on her pelt, ugly scars lay dotted around her body. But the most scary part about her was the terrifying black mask covering her muzzle. Her eyes were pure white and glowing, illuminating the space around her.

"Crimsonpaw." Her voice sounded robotic through the mask. "Welcome to the Dark Forest."

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# Chapter 22

"My name is Glitch." The she cat meowed, and Crimsonpaw reflected on how the strange cat's name suited her well. After a heavy silence filled the air bretween the two, Glitch hissed, her voice crackling through the mask. "Now, I see you have been having trouble in your clan..."

Crimsonpaw murmured. "Have you been watching me?" *Whoever this she cat is, and wherever this.. this Dark Forest place is...* Crimsonpaw had a bad feeling about it all.

"Yes, I have." The scarred she cat rumbled, taking a step closer to Crimsonpaw. Her glowing white eyes turned down to meet her gaze. "Are you going to thank me for saving your life?"

"You saved my life?" The red she cat queried, narrowing her amber eyes.

"I haven't healed you yet, but I will... Or- rather- my friend will." Glitch purred and began striding away, her crooked tail twitching. "Follow." She ordered firmly, giving Crimsonpaw no choice but to follow her.

They walked for a long time. Crimsonpaw was lost after the first three steps, the Dark Forest seemed to go on forever, and every twist and turn looked exactly the same as the last. *How does Glitch know where to go?* She wondered, bewildered.

As if reading her mind, Glitch replied smoothly. "After spending most of your life here, you learn just about everything about the portion of Dark Forest that belongs to you."

"So is this your territory? Are you part of a clan?" But she doubted the scarred she cat was a warrior- she had a rogue name and that strange mask.

"You could say I'm the leader of this territory, and I'm not a former

clan member. But since discovering this place, I have found all the secrets of the clans." Crimsonpaw could sense the grin rising on Glitch's mouth, even with a thick black mask covering it.

The white she cat paused when they came across a clearing. There was a den on one side, sheltered by thick vines and dried up leaves. Glitch's voice snarled through her mask, coming out even more terrifying than anything Crimsonpaw had heard. "Spark!" The scarred she cat's voice echoed around the clearing, her glowing white eyes narrowed impatiently.

"Yes?" The light ginger she cat emerged from the den. "What do you want?" Her blue eyes narrowed when she saw Crimsonpaw. "Another apprentice, Glitch? You know what happened to the last three."

"It won't happen with Crimsonpaw." Glitch replied, growling at Spark. "She is strong. She will be able to take it."

*Be able to take what?* Crimsonpaw blinked in confusion, staring at the two she cats. *What sort of nonsense is she thinking up in her mind?*

Spark stalked towards Crimsonpaw, her blue eyes searching her, studying her. "You look small, feeble." She sniffed her as she circled. "Stand straighter, stop cowering down."

Crimsonpaw held back a squeak as her ear was nipped by Spark. "I said stand straight!" Her voice growled in her ear. Crimsonpaw immediately lifted her head a bit higher, her chest puffing out. "Better." Spark murmured. "You look bigger now. But you're still as small as a kit."

The red she cat held back a growl, annoyed at Spark for mentioning her size so many times. It wasn't her fault that she was tiny!

Glitch's voice rumbled from beside her. "She will do it, I can feel her hidden potential. The shadows pull towards her. She is the one!"

Spark let out a warning growl at the scarred she cat, her pretty ginger pelt bristling. "You're desperate for an apprentice, so desperate that you think this... this *kit* will be able take your place!"

Crimsonpaw flinched at the venom on Spark's tongue as she spat the word 'kit.' She let out a small noise of complaint, wanting to leave the Dark Forest. Glitch and Spark were scary, and they were talking about something Crimsonpaw couldn't understand.

"Just heal her and we'll speak of this later." Glitch replied, her thorn-sharp claws scraping along the ground. The scar over her left eye creased as her glowing white eyes narrowed. "We will speak again soon, Crimsonpaw."

Before Crimsonpaw could utter another word, Spark lifted a paw and rested it firmly on her head. She gasped as her body went numb and she collapsed on the ground, darkness quickly encompassing her vision.

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# Chapter 23

Crimsonpaw snapped awake with a gasp, she felt the moorland wind tugging at her pelt, but there was a strange darkness around her. She opened her eyes to see a strange cat towering above her. She gasped and jolted to her paws, scrambling away. She yelped in surprise as her hind paws slipped over the edge of the cliff, her foreclaws digging into the ground so that she didn't fall to her death. Her hind legs scrabbled against the rock wall, trying to pull herself up.

The grey she cat immediately lunged for Crimsonpaw and she let out a short cry of fear, expecting the cat to hurt her. But instead strong, firm jaws dug gently into her scruff and pulled her up, off the lip of the cliff. She was placed back down a safe distance from the great drop. The grey she cat smiled at Crimsonpaw. "Good morning."

"W-who are you?" She whimpered, her red fur bristling.

"I'm Splash." She replied, standing back as a pair of dark blue wings unfurled behind her. "I'm a descendant of your tribe."

"H-how'd you know I was a tribe cat?" She asked, her eyes glued to the beautiful feathered wings. A spark of jealousy blossomed inside of her. *Why did I have to lose my wings?*

"Your scent, a tribe cat has a distinct scent, even when they have lived their lives in a clan." Splash replied, grinning faintly when she saw where Crimsonpaw's gaze was. "I see you're still waiting for your wings, judging by the way you're looking at mine."

Crimsonpaw flinched and lowered her gaze, flattening her ears. "I lost them."

Splash let out a soft mew of surprise. "Oh, you poor thing!" She stepped closer to her, her wings pulling the red she cat into a hug. Crimsonpaw sank into Splash's embrace. It was warm and

comfortable, even if this she cat was a complete stranger. "It must've been terrible. How did your family cope?"

"My parents don't want anything to do with me." Crimsonpaw muttered with a sigh.

"That's understandable." Splash murmured, giving her head a small lick before releasing her from the hug. "Tribe cats are really proud about their kits' wings. When a cat's wings are lost, the parents often abandon them."

Crimsonpaw dug her claws into the ground, suddenly getting angry. "That's stupid! Why can't my parents love me even without my wings?"

"That's just how things are." Splash replied, clearing her throat. "Now.. I thought you were dead and coated un blood, and now you're healed and alive.. What's up with that?"

Crimsonpaw frowned. She didn't know if she was supposed to mention Glitch or Spark to anyone. Would she get in trouble for meeting them?

After some thought, the red furred apprentice replied. "My ancestors from Starclan healed me and sent me back here to live."

"Starclan huh? Not the tribe's ancestors." Splash murmured. "Strange, they should've been the ones to greet you."

"Maybe it's because I'm a clan warrior now." Crimsonpaw shrugged.

"Yeah, I guess so." Splash shrugged as well, chuckling. "Anyway, what's your name?"

"Crimsonpaw." She replied.

"A 'paw?' You seem pretty small for an apprentice." The grey she cat murmured.

Crimsonpaw forced down a growl. Why did everyone mention her size like that? She wasn't a kit! "I'm just a small cat, shut up!"

Splash took a small step back. "Sorry, I didn't mean to offend you. I didn't realise you bothered so much about your size."

"Everyone always attacks me because of it." Crimsonpaw snarled. "Of course I'm bothered."

Splash glanced briefly in the direction on Flameclan camp. "I saw those two warriors hurt you. Did they bully you just because you are small?" A hint of anger dripped from her voice.

"Not exactly.. I also killed their brother." She sighed, baring her teeth. "But I had a good reason to."

"Did this dead brother hurt you too?" Splash guessed. Crimsonpaw's silence seemed to be sufficient as an answer. "How about I go teach those two a lesson?"

"Don't kill them please!" Crimsonpaw gasped. "I don't want their blood on my paws as well!"

Splash's lips formed a straight line, her blue eyes narrowed. A silent sigh seemed to leave her lips, and she dipped her head. "Then I'll just give them a little beating." She winked.

Crimsonpaw nodded, feeling slightly better. "Alright, I guess that works..." She didn't like hurting other cats, she didn't want to inflict pain on others just because they did that to her. Maybe that was what made her so weak, that she was too soft-hearted. But she didn't want to be mean, she didn't want others to go through the suffering she did no matter how much they deserved it. Whatever came over her the day Pebblepaw died, she hoped it never returned.

Splash was already padding away, towards camp. "Come on Crimsonpaw, let's go give these toms a big bonk in the head."

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# Chapter 24

"There they are." Splash murmured, watching from a clump of bushes near the outside wall of camp. A hunting patrol was trotting out of the main clearing and into the moorland. Both Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot were in the patrol with Stoneclaw and Burningfire leading the way. They were heading towards the Monsterclan side of Flameclan's territory. That area was notorious for a plentiful supply of rabbits.

"Go on." Splash whispered. "Ask to join the patrol."

Crimsonpaw sighed. She didn't know why she was agreeing to Splash's plan. There was no way of nothing if the grey she cat would betray her or not. She could easily leave her to the mercy of the two young warriors. Crimsonpaw didn't actually know why she was even going along with Splash's plan in the first place- trusting a rogue she had just met based only on the fact that she had wings from her tribe. Splash had reassured her many times over as they walked to Flameclan camp that members of the Tribe of Winged Cats were fiercely loyal to one another, and that she would never dream of putting Crimsonpaw in harm's way. It hadn't done much to make her feel better about trusting Splash, but she had decided to go along with the plan anyway.

Crimsonpaw shook the thoughts away as she reached the patrol, feeling Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot glare at her. She sensed surprise coming from both toms. They thought she had died. She snuck a quick glance at them, forcing down a chuckle to see absolute horror and shock on their faces.

"May I join the patrol?" She asked, trying to sound as cheerful as possible despite the dreaded feeling within her. She hoped the plan would work out alright.

Stoneclaw narrowed his eyes before giving a small shrug. "Of course." His tail flicked, ordering her to follow him. She fell into step at the back of the patrol as they trotted away.

Pigeonfeather sneered at her from where he padded in front of her, Thunderfoot echoing the glare. She forced away the sliver of fear and glared right back up at the two older toms.

Soon they arrived at the large, clear expanse of moorland where the rabbit families lives. Stoneclaw ordered them to spread out. That was Crimsonpaw's cue.

She padded off in a different direction to the rest of the patrol, deliberately going towards an area where there were many bushes for cover. She heard Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot following her. *Please Splash be here soon.* She begged, glancing back to see the two toms nearing her.

She paused in a small dip in the ground, looking up at the two. "Why are you following me?" She demanded, trying to stall them before they inevitably tried to kill her again, permanently this time.

"You should be dead!" Thunderfoot snarled, circling around her, his gaze dragged along her body for any signs of scars left by the wounds he had given her.

Crimsonpaw was glad she had thick fur to cover the scars she had collected in her life. No one would ever need to know. No one would ever criticise her ugly scars because as far as they knew, those scars didn't exist.

Pigeonfeather growled. "We're going to make sure you stay dead this time!" He lunged for her, and she let out a cry of fear. The grey warrior was barely a whisker-length from pinning her down when Splash burst from the cover of a bush and threw the tom onto the ground with a hiss.

With a swift stroke of her wings, she propelled herself onto Thunderfoot before he could realise what was happening. She picked him up by his scruff and tossed him onto his brother before pinning both toms down beneath her claws. They writhed with yowls of surprise and terror. She quieted them both down with a hard glare, her blue eyes holding a strong promise of death if they uttered a cry for help.

Crimsonpaw felt a flash of sick joy as the two toms fell silent, their eyes wide in fear. She stalked up to them, relishing in the new sense of power she held over the bigger warriors.

Splash glanced at her and gave a slight nod, a grin on her lips. It was time for Crimsonpaw to alert Stoneclaw and Burningfire of the rogue attacking the two warriors.

She dove into the undergrowth trotting hurriedly towards the two warriors. She took a few quick breathes to make her voice sound stressed. "H-help! Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot are under attack by a rogue!"

Stoneclaw looked up, blinking in surprise. "Where?" The senior warrior demanded.

"Follow me, if we stick low we can surprise attack her!" Crimsonpaw squeaked, leading the way back to where Splash was keeping Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot.

They reached the dip and Crimsonpaw whispered. "Stay low! Don't let her see you!" It was strange, telling the two older warriors what to do. Strangely, they listened and that good feeling of power burst within her. It felt great, it made her feel more secure, stronger.

They peered through the bushes, watching Splash as she glared down at the two warriors. They had reduced themselves to begging for their lives. *As they should be. After trying to kill me, they should die!* Crimsonpaw bared her teeth as she remembered Pebblepaw's gruesome death, suddenly wishing a similar demise upon the two grey warriors at Splash's mercy.

Splash glanced briefly at Crimsonpaw, such a small movement, barely noticeable to anyone else. Then she turned back to the two grey toms and growled. "Did you or did you not try and kill that apprentice?"

"Crimsonpaw?" Pigeonfeather squeaked. "Never! We don't harm our clan mates!"

"Tell me the truth!" Splash snarled, her claws digging into their

skin. They both cried feebly, writhing and kicking against the winged she cat. "Did you try to kill Crimsonpaw?"

"W-We were only doing it in revenge for Pebblepaw!" Thunderfoot wailed, pathetic tears streaming down his face.

Stoneclaw gasped and looked at Crimsonpaw. "They did what?!"

Burningfire murmured. "They tried to kill you? In revenge for Pebblepaw? But a fox killed him..."

Crimsonpaw muttered. "Exactly! They've got the wrong idea, they think I did it!" The lie slipped so easily from her lips that she was shocked. Perhaps it was because it wasn't a total lie. She hadn't done the actual killing- the fox had.

Stoneclaw growled and stormed into the clearing. "What is all this about trying to kill Crimsonpaw in revenge for Pebblepaw?!"

Splash darted away from Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot, giving Crimsonpaw a sly grin. Their plan had been successful.

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**1110 words! YEEE**

# Chapter 25

Stoneclaw led the way back to camp with Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot trailing behind him. Burningfire followed behind the two young warriors, making sure they didn't cause any trouble. Crimsonpaw and Splash padded at the back of the patrol.

Crimsonpaw was surprised Stoneclaw wasn't guarding Splash- the strange rogue who had attacked his warriors. He somehow deemed Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot more trouble than Splash. She was glad the grey warrior made that decision; it was the right one.

The patrol returned to camp, padding down the small tunnel and into the main clearing. Crimsonpaw saw most of the clan were out of their dens, looking up in interest as the patrol appeared.

She gasped in surprise when a golden spotted pelt threw himself at her, causing her to fall over. She looked up into the blue eyes of Jaguarpaw and smiled as he grinned happily down at her.

"Crimsonpaw! You were gone all night long! Where were you?" The apprentice demanded as he let her stand again.

"It's a long story, and I'm sure Stoneclaw will explain enough to make it clear." Crimsonpaw replied, shaking her pelt. Jaguarpaw glanced at Stoneclaw just as the grey tom started speaking.

"This rogue, who calls herself Splash, was found attacking Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot." The tom began, watching his clan mates as they turned to glare at Splash. "But strangely, all she required was information on how our two young warriors had attempted to murder Crimsonpaw." His words sent shockwaves of murmurs throughout the clan as the processed his announcement.

Frozenstar rose her voice against the crowd as she climbed onto the Highrock, her ice blue eyes narrowed. "They tried to murder Crimsonpaw? What kind of nonsense is this?" The white and grey dappled she cat demanded, glaring at Splash. "Are you trying to get

my warriors banished my making up lies?

"It is not a lie, I saw them attack her." Splash growled, her wings twitching restlessly against her back.

"You're lying!" Shadowtail snarled. "You're just siding with your winged freak friends and making up mouse-brained stories!" The deputy lashed his tail.

Crimsonpaw heard Splash growl angrily, her ears flattened. The grey she cat glanced briefly at Crimsonpaw. "I don't know how you stand such rude behaviour." She muttered, glancing back at the Flameclan deputy. "It is all true, Stoneclaw and Burningfire both heard these two fox-hearts confess to the attempted murder of Crimsonpaw!"

Crimsonpaw flinched as she felt the heavy gazes of her clan mates turn to her. She spotted her parents watching her from the far end of camp, their eyes narrowed to slits. Her siblings sat beside their parents, their heads bowed and not meeting her gaze.

Frozenstar cleared her throat, and the almost suffocating attention on Crimsonpaw was lifted. "Pigeonfeather, Thunderfoot." The two warriors looked up at their leader. "Did you attempt to kill Crimsonpaw?"

"No." Pigeonfeather growled, his grey fur bristling.

"...Yes." Thunderfoot murmured, hanging his head as his brother gave him a sharp look.

Frozenstar's lips formed a straight line. "Stoneclaw? Burningfire?" She glanced at the two witnesses- they both nodded. The white and grey she cat shook her head sadly. "Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot... You are hereby banished from Flameclan. If you are seen on our territory by sundown today, your former clan mates will treat you as they would to any rogue."

Pigeonfeather dug his claws into the ground and snarled. "Crimsonpaw killed Pebblepaw! That's why we did it!"

Frozenstar narrowed her eyes at Crimsonpaw. She bit her lip, trying

to act as innocent as she could. She breathed a sigh of relief as Frozenstar glanced back at the two banished warriors. "You are still exiled, this changes nothing. We will look further into Pebblepaw's death once we have gotten rid of you."

The two grey warriors let out snarls of outrage before turning and fleeing from camp, hopefully never to be seen ever again.

Jaguarpaw leaned against Crimsonpaw and murmured. "What do we do now? Stay quiet, hope nothing happens?"

Crimsonpaw hissed back, her voice low. "Be quiet, someone'll hear you." She glanced around, breathing a sigh of relief when she saw no one was paying attention to her or the spotted tom.

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Later that day, just as the sun dipped behind the moorland hills of their territory, Crimsonpaw padded past the leader's den. She stopped when she heard voices inside. Frozenstar was in a meeting with the senior warriors. She had no idea what they were discussing, but she guessed it had something to do with her, as most things were.

"-Crimsonpaw can't be trusted." She heard Shadowtail mutter from within the den. *Of course the deputy hates me, his apprentice was Pebblepaw.*

"Do you think she killed Pebblepaw?" Frozenstar asked her deputy.

"No doubt about it." Shadowtail growled. "Crimsonpaw always caused trouble for Pebblepaw, it seems obvious she would try and kill him."

*That lying piece of fox-dung!* Crimsonpaw stifled a growl, pressing closer to the den wall to listen more to the conversation.

"Yes," Ashwhisper murmured, her voice sounding closer to Crimsonpaw, "I have seen those two arguing sometimes in camp. There is something going on."

"Then why was there fox scent everywhere?" Obsidianpelt

demanded. "Crimsonpaw would never kill a fellow clan mate, she's too soft-hearted to commit such an act."

*He just had to add in that extra part at the end, didn't he?* Crimsonpaw bared her teeth. Her father really did hate her, didn't he? She sighed. At least he was standing up for her before the leader, even if he was insulting her at the same time.

"I do have to agree with Obsidianpelt here..." Stoneclaw meowed. "I find it hard to believe Crimsonpaw would do such a thing."

"Pigeonfeather wouldn't just announce such a big lie like that though." Ashwhisper pointed out. "I think it's quiet believable that Crimsonpaw killed Pebblepaw."

"Then tell me how she got the fox scent on him without leaving a trace of her own." Obsidianpelt muttered.

"Easy." Shadowtail answered. Crimsonpaw could *hear* the grin on his lips as he explained. "She let the fox do the work. All she needed to do was lead him to a fox and leave him to die there."

Murmurs echoed around the den, and Crimsonpaw bit her lip nervously. *Oh no... Will Frozenstar kick me out now?*

"Also, what's up with Splash? She definitely has some sort of connection with Crimsonpaw, they must be planning something." Ashwhisper muttered.

Shadowtail growled. "Crimsonpaw got rid of Pebblepaw, Splash got rid of Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot. Smells like trouble is being brewed between them to me."

"Are you only saying this because Splash has wings?" Obsidianpelt growled.

Shadowtail chuckled. "Didn't you once say that your tribe was very loyal to one another? Seems to me like Crimsonpaw and Splash are forming an alliance to fight against us."

Obsidianpelt scoffed. "Impossible!"

"Not really.." Frozenstar murmured. "It is entirely possible, actually."

Ashwhisper asked. "What are we going to do?"

"For now, we will keep an eye on Crimsonpaw. If she does anything suspicious again, we will discuss some more before making a final decision." Frozenstar meowed and the den fell silent in agreement.

There was rustling as cats stood up and Crimsonpaw took the opportunity to leave quickly and quietly, unnoticed.

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# Chapter 26

"The Dark Forest is cold." Crimsonpaw muttered as she stepped across the chilling surface of the pathway.

Glitch rumbled through her mask as she padded ahead of Crimsonpaw. "You're just soft." A hint of a chuckle left the she cat's lips.

Crimsonpaw felt a flash of anger and gritted her teeth, glaring at the ground as she followed the scarred she cat. *I wish cats would stop insulting me like that.*

Spark trotted behind Crimsonpaw, her pawsteps so silent that the red she cat had to keep glancing over her shoulder to make sure the ginger feline was still there. Looking up at Glitch again, Crimsonpaw muttered. "Where are we even going?"

"You're going to meet some new friends." Glitch replied simply, her crooked tail twitching as she quickened her pace slightly.

Crimsonpaw narrowed her amber eyes as she struggled to keep up with the older she cat, nearly having to break into a run as they hurried down the pathway, worn out by many pawsteps.

For a heartbeat, she wondered just how many cats lived in the Dark Forest, and why they were there. Glitch hadn't explained much. *Actually- scratch that- Glitch hasn't explained* anything *to me.* All she knew was that the Dark Forest was home to cats who had died, so it was like Starclan. Maybe it was a Starclan for rogues, that's why they all had rogue names. Rogue Starclan wasn't as nice as the real Starclan. *Even though I've never been to Starclan before...* Crimsonpaw noted mentally.

She sighed. *Hopefully I won't end up going here when I die. I want to live a happy afterlife in Starclan, with all my friends and family. Or maybe I'll go to the Tribe's Starclan, and finally meet my ancestors.* Then she narrowed her eyes. *But now that I lost my wings, I probably*

*won't be accepted up there...*

She hadn't realised she had stopped walking until Spark gave her haunches a rough shove. "Get moving, kit!"

Crimsonpaw forced down a squeak from the shock of the blow and quickly started hurrying to catch up with Glitch. The thin furred she cat was already many tail-lengths ahead and she had to run in order to reach her again.

It wasn't long before Crimsonpaw started to slow again, not because of her mind running wild, but because she was getting tired. Her limbs were growing numb, her heartbeat rapid like a rabbit's. She panted, the cool Dark Forest air acting like shards of ice in her lungs.

"Faster!" Spark growled, this time digging her teeth into her tail tip.

Crimsonpaw gasped and tugged her tail away with a yelp. "Stop it!" She cried.

"Then move faster!" The ginger she cat snarled, shoving her forwards again. Crimsonpaw stumbled, nearly falling over, but she caught herself just in time with a soft hiss.

"We're here!" Glitch came to a stop before a large clearing with a large rock in the far end. At the base of the rock were two young cats battle training. They looked about the size of an apprentice, but they were still much bigger than Crimsonpaw, their eyes blazing in anger as they tumbled together on the sandy ground.

"Moonpaw! Stolenpaw!" Glitch snapped through her black mask, her pure white eyes narrowed as she glared at the two apprentices. "Get over here!"

The two apprentices broke apart from their skirmish, and the grey tom looked up with a soft growl. "Who is that? Why are you bringing kits here?" His emerald green eyes blazed in anger as he stalked right up to Crimsonpaw and peered down at her. She bit her lip nervously, he looked a lot like Pebblepaw. She blocked out the visions of the dead tom and glared right up at Moonpaw.

"I am not a kit." She tried to make her appearance as big as possible, but it was hard when the stocky tom was nearly twice her size. "I bet I'm older than you too!"

"Ha! You older than me? No way!" Moonpaw laughed and rolled his eyes at her, amusement glittering in them. She growled at the way he pushed her down in that way. Why did everyone judge her by her height and not her potential?

"I'm eight moons old." She replied, flattening her ears to the back of her head. "Bet you aren't even seven!"

Moonpaw's green eyes seemed to widen in surprise for a heartbeat before he quickly covered up his surprise with a swift shake of his head. "You're lying, kit."

Glitch's foreleg suddenly appeared between them, and Crimsonpaw was stuck staring at an ugly-looking scar running down her leg. *How did she get all these scars? Was she bullied like I was?*

"Moonpaw, if you speak to my apprentice like that again I will not hesitate in slicing off that pretty tail of yours." Glitch growled, her pupilless eyes glowering down at the grey tom.

The young apprentice's eyes widened in surprise and he took a few steps back. "She's your apprentice?"

"Precisely." Glitch replied, moving a step to the side so that she stood beside the red she cat. "Crimsonpaw will be my successor."

"You sure she won't die like..." Stolenpaw mumbled, her eyes narrowing in grief. "...Ravenpaw did.. Right?"

Spark gave Stolenpaw a cuff on the side of her head. "We've already been through this, Glitch seems sure Crimsonpaw's the one."

Moonpaw muttered, jealousy clear in his tone. "She's too weak and tiny to be your apprentice."

Crimsonpaw growled. "I'll show you weak and tiny!" She charged for Moonpaw and knocked the tom over. He let out a soft gasp of surprise at the attack, but quickly got a hold of himself and knocked

her away with a simple kick. Crimsonpaw staggered backwards, falling on her back with a hiss.

Moonpaw stood up, shaking his pelt. "See, weak!" He growled, giving her a kick, his paw making contact with her shoulder. Crimsonpaw winced and instinctively curled herself into a protective ball, causing Moonpaw and Stolenpaw to burst out laughing. Even Spark was holding back soft chuckles.

Crimsonpaw took a deep breath from within her ball and slowly lifted her head, standing up. Moonpaw was still laughing, a wide smirk on his lips. "You'll never be able to have Glitch's power, you're too fragile. I'm surprised you haven't left your clan to become a kittypet yet."

She bit her tongue as tears threatened to spill. *No. Stop it.* She ordered herself. *Don't cry in front of them. It'll make yourself look even weaker!* She bit down so hard on her tongue that she tasted the warm tang of her own blood start pooling in her mouth.

"Aw, are you going to cry, kit?" Moonpaw cackled. "Go on, we won't judge you."

Stolenpaw giggled. "Cry, Crimsonpaw! Cry like the kit you are!"

Crimsonpaw forced down a sob and took a deep breath. "Shut up!" She cried out, screwing her eyes shut.

There was a sudden warmth behind her and she looked up to see Glitch looming over her. "Time for you to wake up, I think." The white she cat rested her crooked tail on her head and Crimsonpaw was plunged into darkness.

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# Chapter 27

When Crimsonpaw woke up, it was well past dawn. She lifted her head to see her siblings' nests were empty. *They must already be at training.*

With a yawn and a brief stretch, Crimsonpaw padded out of the apprentices den and into the main clearing. She spotted Bouncepaw happily munching on a mouse by the fresh-kill pile and padded over to her brother. The black and red tom looked up at her as she settled down next to him.

"Hey." He purred through a mouthful of mouse.

"Hi." She chuckled. "Where are the others?"

"Flarepaw and Falconpaw? They're out battle training." Bouncepaw swallowed and cleared his throat. "I was sent back because I tried to push Falconpaw into a nest of fire ants." He grinned sheepishly and Crimsonpaw shook her head.

"Why didn't you wake me?" She asked.

"You were tossing in your sleep, and we tried to wake you up but you stayed fast asleep." Bouncepaw shrugged.

"Oh." She sighed, frowning down at her paws.

"Hey.. Bouncepaw?" A she cat's voice sounded on her brother's other side and she looked over to see Fernkit- one of Honeytail's kits. The little she kit looked up at Bouncepaw with awe-filled eyes. "C-Can I touch your wings?"

Bouncepaw blinked. "Uh... Sure.. I guess.." He unfolded his right wing, letting it lay on the ground at Fernkit's paws.

The brown she cat gasped. "Whoa.." She tentatively reached out with her paw and touched the sharp claw at the joint, then down the black scales of Bouncepaw's wing, her paw finally trailing down

to the red.

Bouncepaw glanced at Crimsonpaw, who whispered in his ear. "Looks like you've got someone with a crush on you." She giggled.

"More like a crush on my wings." Bouncepaw glanced back at Fernkit and Crimsonpaw saw him chewing his bottom lip nervously as the kit continued to pat and stroke his wing.

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By sunhigh, Crimsonpaw decided to join a border patrol to the twolegplace side of their territory. It was a small patrol consisting only of Dustfur, Embergaze and her.

They trotted quickly along the worn down path that led to the border, weavinf among the tall grass of the moorland. The wind pulled at Crimsonpaw's fur as she followed the patrol and a small smile tugged at her lips. It was nice, doing simple clan chores. *And now that Pebblepaw, Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot are gone, I'm safe from harm.* She clung to the hope that life would be better from that moment on, that she would become a strong warrior of Flameclan, and maybe even leader one day.

But what she had heard the other night... Would all of her wishes be destroyed? Would Frozenstar kick her out of her clan? Worry nagged at her, quickly replacing the peacefulness that had only been allowed a brief appearance. *And what about Glitch and the Dark Forest?* What was going to happen there? What did it mean to become Glitch's apprentice?

"Crimsonpaw! Wake up!" A paw slapped her face and she stumbled sideways with a gasp of surprise, looking up to see Dustfur glaring down at her. The older warrior lashed his tail. "Stop day-dreaming and help us mark the border."

Crimsonpaw dipped her head. "Yes, Dustfur." She slunk away towards the border, heading for a clump of little flowers. She paused to sniff the air once she reached the borderline, narrowing her eyes when the scent of rogue filled her nostrils.

She peered closer to the flowers, noticing some tuffs of dark fur left in the small thorns of the stems. Glancing down, she spotted some pawsteps leading towards twolegplace. *A rogue has been here...* She searched across the border for any signs of the rogue- his scent was still fresh. She spotted nothing except for a trio of squirrels racing around a small clearing a few tail-lengths away with high-pitched battle squeaks.

Crimsonpaw chose not to mention the scent. The rogue had clearly turned back once he smelled their scent markers, there was no need to cause a panic.

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# Chapter 28

The night following the strange rogue sighting, Crimsonpaw awoke once again in the Dark Forest. *Will I ever just have a normal dream?* She sighed and stretched a bit, looking around for Glitch. The scarres white she cat was no where to be found. *Huh.* Did Crimsonpaw have to go and find her? Was she waiting in that training clearing?

Crimsonpaw looked around. She had no idea where she was. Even after trekking the Dark Forest for two nights, she still didn't know where everything was. It all looked the same- same smells, same trees, same bushes. Same everything! She wondered how long it had taken Glitch and everyone else living there to learn their way around.

There was a small growl behind her and she spun around, her eyes widening in shock as she stared up into the angry green eyes of Pebblepaw. The grey tom glared down at her. "What are you doing here, Wingless?"

"Stop calling me that!" She growled in return, taking a few fearful steps back. *Where is Glitch? Why hasn't she turned up yet?*

"I still haven't forgotten how you left me to die." Pebblepaw snarled, stalking closer to her with bared teeth. "You fox-heart! I'm going to make you pay!"

"Leave me alone!" Crimsonpaw hissed, glancing quickly behind her back to make sure she didn't back herself into a corner.

Pebblepaw grinned and lunged for her. She let out a squeak and dove sideways before breaking into a run, away from the grey tom. Adrenaline pulsed through her as she ran, her eyes wide. *Why is he here? Shouldn't he be in Starclan?!* She could feel Pebblepaw's thudding pawsteps behind her as he easily chased her down and pounced on her back. She cried out as her legs gave way and she slammed into the ground, Pebblepaw pinning her down with

unsheathed claws. His hot breath warmed the back of her head and he smirked from above her. "You ruined my life, now I'm going to ruin yours."

Crimsonpaw flailed her legs against the ground, her claws tearing through the soil as she tried to wiggle out of the grey tom's grip. "Stop it Pebblepaw! I'm sorry I didn't help you, but that doesn't mean you have to kill me!"

"Shut up!" Pebblepaw's claws dug into her pelt and she gasped, her struggles growing more frantic.

"Help! Someone help me!" She cried, gritting her teeth against the tears that threatened to spill.

Pebblepaw placed a paw on her head and pushed her muzzle into the ground to muffle her cries. "Be quiet you kit!"

"Get off her!" There was a snarl from beside her and Glitch burst from the bushes, throwing Pebblepaw off Crimsonpaw. The grey tom let out a soft growl of surprise and whirled around to face the white she cat.

By the time Pebblepaw had locked gazes with Glitch, the scarred she cat had sliced her claws across his throat, his blood spraying onto her pelt. The grey tom let out a choke of surprise, stumbling back a few steps before falling over. Crimsonpaw sat up, staring at Pebblepaw as he slowly bled out into the ground, his eyes glazed in agony.

Crimsonpaw turned away to look up at Glitch. The Dark Forest she cat seemed to be smirking under her mask, her eyes glowing brighter. "Watch, Crimsonpaw, this is how you create more shadows..." She turned back to Pebblepaw and rolled the tom onto his back. He let out a soft mumble of pain, his eyes closing as Glitch placed a paw on his chest and forehead.

"What are you doing?" Crimsonpaw asked, the end of her sentence drifting into silence as Pebblepaw let out a cry of pain, his body siezing up and arching against Glitch's hold. Then he went limp, his eyes shutting as a single trendil of smoke lifted from his chest.

Glitch caught the trendil with her paw and it wrapped itself around her foreleg.

The white she cat turned slowly to face Crimsonpaw. "And that is how you harvest souls to make them your shadows."

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# Chapter 29

"Why did you do that?!" Glitch snarled at Spark, her glowing white eyes blazing in pure anger. "You piece of fox-dung, you nearly got Crimsonpaw killed!"

Crimsonpaw shivered as the two bigger she cats stood face-to-face next to Pebblepaw's still-fading body. Barely a heartbeat after Glitch had taken Pebblepaw's soul, Spark had emerged calmly from the bushes, claiming that she had set up the encounter.

Spark's face was calm, stone cold as she replied. "I had to see if Crimsonpaw had any potential." The ginger she cat glanced at the little red she cat, her eyes narrowing. "Clearly, she does not."

Crimsonpaw shrank into herself under Spark's strong gaze, her ears flattening as she looked down at her paws. *So Spark led Pebblepaw here to attack me, just to see if I had what it took to be with them?* She forced down the surge of anger rising within her, keeping her body rigid as the two older she cats argued.

"She nearly died!" Glitch scored her thorn-sharp claws across the ground, making dirt fly up into the air.

"Only because she's too weak to do anything!" Spark snarled. "I was watching the whole time! She didn't once try to fight back, she *let* him hurt her!"

"It's not her fault she's so small!" Glitch's fur bristled along her spine as she glared at the ginger she cat. "I'm trying to help her get stronger!"

Spark shook her head in disappointment. "Glitch, you're such an idiot. Can't you see that you can't change who she is. The shadows won't change a thing." She quickly added. "If she can even get far enough to take them from your cold, dead body."

Glitch let out a low growl and swiped at Spark with unsheathed

claws. The ginger she cat hissed in surprise, backing away a few steps as blood dripped down her cheek. The white she cat yowled through her black mask. "Crimsonpaw will be the one and you can't change that, no matter how jealous you are!"

"I'm not jealous!" Spark snarled immediately, her eyes narrowing in rage.

"We all know you've been after my shadows since the moment we met." Glitch hissed and started to circle Spark.

The ginger she cat copied Glitch's movements. "I'm happy with my moon mist, thank you very much."

"No you're not." Glitch growled. "It's weak here in the Dark Forest and you want more power. The only way to do that would be to take my shadows and convert them, but without my consent you're not taking one flake of them!"

Spark let out a screech of outrage and lunged for Glitch. The two she cats fell into a writhing, clawing bundle. Crimsonpaw couldn't see what was happening, it was a terrifying blur of movement.

It wasn't long before the two fell apart. Spark held Glitch's mask in her jaws- she must've unhooked it during the tussle. The scarred white she cat let out a low snarl, her muzzle finally revealed. As soon as Crimsonpaw caught sight of it, she looked away. Terrible scars ripped through her muzzle with sections of her lips missing to permanently reveal her gleaming teeth.

"Give that back. Now." Glitch hissed, her voice scarily low as she glared at Spark.

The ginger she cat dropped the mask on the ground and Glitch lunged for it, but Spark placed a paw on it, tugging it away from the white she cat. "Not until you get it through your thick head that I'm the rightful holder of the moon mist."

"You will never steal my shadows from me!" Glitch snarled.

"I will eventually." Spark vowed, lifting her paw from the mask so that Glitch could grab it. "I will convert them back and stop this evil

cycle of soul harvesting."

Glitch didn't reply as she frantically placed her mask back over her scarred muzzle. Crimsonpaw watched as the white she cat visibly relaxed once the mask was on, a slow breath of relief leaving her lips.

Spark snarled. "Pathetic. Both of you." The ginger she cat gave Crimsonpaw a glare before turning away and disappearing into the undergrowth.

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# Chapter 30

Crimsonpaw yawned sleepily as she awoke from her Dark Forest dream. Although she was slow and tired, her mind was reeling from all the new information she had learned. *What is this Moon Mist? And why does Spark want to convert it back?*

Her thoughts were cut short when there was a sudden yowl of pain from beside her and she snapped her gaze around to see Flarepaw writhing in her nest. The orange she cat wailed, her yellow eyes stretched wide. "My wings!" The apprentice yowled. "My wings are coming!"

Crimsonpaw let out a gasp and stood up, stumbling out of the apprentices den to find her parents. She barely took to pawsteps before Bouncepaw bounded roughly past her, his red wings flailing as he raced into the warriors den to retrieve their parents. Crimsonpaw frowned and let out a faint sigh. All her siblings were going to get their wings and she was stuck with nothing. Her parents hated her, the clan despised her. Perhaps living in twolegplace with Jaguarpaw wasn't such a bad idea.

As if on cue, there was a tap on her shoulder and she glanced sideways to see Jaguarpaw standing beside her. "So, are you going to wait out here or go in there and watch?"

Crimsonpaw shrugged, her amber eyes turning to look at her paws. "Probably stay out here. Obsidianpelt and Solarflare won't want me around." She murmured softly.

Jaguarpaw pressed himself closer to her. "It's okay, Crimsonpaw." He whispered. "There seems to be a lot troubling you, and I don't know if you want to tell me, but you don't have to."

She glanced at the spotted tom. "Thanks for being here with me. Even though you don't realise it, you're really helping."

"No problem." He offered her a small smile. She smiled back.

Their conversation was interrupted by a yowl of pain from Flarepaw and the two apprentices flinched. Jaguarpaw murmured quietly. "It's hard to imagine what pain you go through just to have these wings." He sighed and flattened his ears, shifting his forepaws over the ground. "I'm so sorry I made you lose your wings."

Crimsonpaw shrugged, trying not to let the effect of his words show. "I'm fine, it's in the past now. I have other things to worry about."

"Like..?" The tom asked, his breath warming the side of her face as he looked at her.

Crimsonpaw quickly thought up a reason that didn't involve the Dark Forest, shadows or Moon Mist or anything like that. "Uh, being the best warrior I can be."

Jaguarpaw chuckled. "You're already an amazing apprentice, it can't be that much harder."

"Thanks." She purred in reply, brushing her nose against his cheek.

There was the sound of pawsteps behind her and Crimsonpaw pricked her ears to the sound of a faint hiss. She leaned away from Jaguarpaw to see Falconpaw approaching, his blue gaze glued to Jaguarpaw with a protective growl rumbling in his throat. The golden spotted tom lowered his head and took a few steps away from Crimsonpaw. Falconpaw was still on edge, but he visibly relaxed and took Jaguarpaw's place beside his sister.

"So, looks like I'm the last one without wings." Falconpaw murmured once he had seated himself beside Crimsonpaw. The red she cat nodded stiffly, sighing. Her brother ran his tail over her spine comfortingly. "You don't need wings, Crimsonpaw, you're already a strong clan warrior. Wings won't have changed anything."

Crimsonpaw sighed despairingly and tilted her head back to look up at the cloudy blue sky looming above her head. "I went through all that pain, and the only thing I got back for that was mirsery. Everyone hates me, with or without my wings." She felt her eyes blur with tears, pressure building up in her muzzle as she forced

down the pitiful sobs. "It's not fair!" She was sick of whining and crying like a kit, but it was too hard to keep everything hidden.

Falconpaw enveloped her in a warm hug, his chin resting gently against the top of her head. Crimsonpaw nestled her muzzle in her brother's chest fur, her eyes closing as she forced down the tears. "Stay strong Crimsonpaw, everything will be alright in the end."

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**The next chapter(s) will be longer because there are way too many chapters atm xD This may mean updates will be slightly slower.**

# Chapter 31

It was the day before their warrior ceremonies. Crimsonpaw was shaking with excitement as she nibbled hungrily on a rabbit by the fresh-kill pile. Jaguarpaw munched loudly on a vole beside her, beaming happily.

Flarepaw, Bouncepaw and Falconpaw were chatting on the other side of the prey pile. All three of them had their wings, and they had already completed their flying lessons with Obsidianpelt. Crimsonpaw watched them with envy, her amber gaze travelling to Falconpaw's large blue wings, then two Bouncepaw's red wings and finally to Flarepaw's beautiful orange feathered wings.

Falconpaw noticed her envious gaze and offered her a sympathetic smile. She didn't return the gesture and instead glanced back at Jaguarpaw. "So, what was this about an adventure today?"

The golden tom looked up from his vole, a wide grin on his lips. "Ah, so you're going to join me after all?"

"Just tell me what you're planning." Crimsonpaw replied, sighing as she pushed her half-eaten rabbit away, her appetite ruined.

Jaguarpaw leaned in close and breathed in her left ear. "We're going to see the forest."

Crimsonpaw narrowed her eyes, interest blossoming within her. "How?"

"We'll go to Lightclan, since they are the most passive of our bordering clans." Jaguarpaw meowed. "And we'll explore! I've always wanted to see the forest for myself."

Crimsonpaw chuckled. "You seem to be obsessed with losing our bet about getting into the most trouble." She sighed. "Are we going now?"

"Are you finished eating?" He asked.

"Yep." She nodded, feeling a small smile rise on her face. It was about time they went on an adventure somewhere, normal clan duties were getting boring.

Jaguarpaw stood up and started running for the camp exit. "Then let's go!"

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They reached the Lightclan border by the time sunhigh shone high in the sky, warming their backs. Crimsonpaw purred at the warmth, angling her head so that her face caught the sunlight. "It's so nice today."

"Won't get many of these days come leaf-bare." Jaguarpaw replied. "I hope we get snow, it'll mean we have to cuddle up at night to stay warm." He leaned into her, grinning cheekily.

Crimsonpaw giggled and flicked his ears with her tail as she strode closer to the border. "The only thing you're cuddling at night is your nest."

"Can we settle for your tail then?" The spotted tom chuckled, catching up to her as she stopped before the borderline.

"Maybe." She smiled, looking into the Lightclan forest. It was dark, despite the strong sunlight. Trees towered high in the sky, with birds flying about the branches. "I wonder what it's like, being a Lightclan warrior. They must be so used to the dark, they won't get any sunlight in there!"

"Imagine how scary it would be at night." Jaguarpaw added, peering into the bushes as he slowly crept over the border. "Come on, let's go." He whispered, lowering himself to the ground so that his belly fur brushed the soil. "Stay hidden."

Crimsonpaw followed his lead, grinning as she crept after him. The two quickly made their way through Lightclan territory, keeping hidden. Crimsonpaw sniffed the air, flinching at the onslaught of strange scents.

There was a sound behind her and Crimsonpaw whirled around just in time to see a white she cat lunge at them from the bushes. "Intruder!" She hissed, her piercing green eyes narrowed in anger as she pinned Crimsonpaw flat on her back. The red she cat let out a pitiful squeal of surprise and kicked at the she cat. The white she cat wasn't as big as a warrior; she was a Lightclan apprentice.

There was a shriek behind her and she twisted her head around to see a long furred, orange and black apprentice holding Jaguarpaw down.

"What are you doing in Lightclan territory you Flameclan scum?" The white she cat snarled, her acid green eyes blazing with anger.

Crimsonpaw pummelled the she cat's belly with her hind claws, growling. "It was an accident!"

"Accident, huh?" The tom laughed and dug his claws into Jaguarpaw's chest. The spotted tom yowled in pain. "If that was an accident then I guess this is too." He dragged his claws down the length of Jaguarpaw's belly and the golden tom writhed around with pained screeches.

The white she cat grinned insanely down at Crimsonpaw. "You kits shouldn't be out of the nursery, exploring someone else's territory."

"We're not kits!" Crimsonpaw surged upwards and slammed her paws into the she cat's chest. She staggered backwards with a low snarl and quickly lunged for her again, flipping Crimsonpaw onto her front so that it was harder to move.

"Then you're the most pathetic apprentice I've ever seen." She laughed, glancing at her clan mate. "Wildpaw, let's teach these two a lesson."

"Don't overdo it. This one's had enough already." Wildpaw glanced down at Jaguarpaw. The light golden tom was wheezing heavily, his eyes glazed in pain as he bled into the ground.

Crimsonpaw's eyes widened as she stared at Jaguarpaw. "No! Let us go, we didn't do anything wrong!"

The white apprentice growled and sank her claws into Crimsonpaw's cheek. "Quit whining you weakling! You trespassed intentionally! What do you want with us? Is Frozenstar sending in spies?"

"No! It was just an accident! We-" Crimsonpaw gasped, her eyes screwing shut as the she cat gave her a hard blow on her head.

"Shut up! Your voice is so annoying."

Crimsonpaw flinched at the ferocity in her voice, her mews growing silent. She glanced back at Jaguarpaw to see his breathing was fast and shallow as his dark blood soaked through his pelt. *Why does everyone hurt me all the time?* She wondered. *We didn't mean any harm, they have no right to attack us like this.*

Her thoughts were broken off when there was a feline's screech overhead and the sound of beating wings as something dropped ontop of the white she cat holding Crimsonpaw down.

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# Chapter 32

The weight on Crimsonpaw's back was lifted as the Lightclan apprentice was tossed sideways. She leapt to her paws with a gasp, whirling around to see Flarepaw attacking the white she cat, her wings splayed on either side of her as she swiped mercilessly at the smaller cat.

Wildpaw's shocked gasp sounded behind her. "The winged cats are here!" His voice rose to a shrill wail of fear and he darted away from Jaguarpaw to hide in the bushes. Flarepaw charged after him, her wings gracefully folding away onto her back so that she could dive into the bushes after the orange and black tom.

Crimsonpaw rushed to Jaguarpaw's side, shaking her head worriedly. "Oh no, no, no. Jaguarpaw please don't die." She stared at his wound helplessly. It was so deep...

Jaguarpaw let out a weak murmur, a small smile on his lips. "Looks like I've lost the bet." His coughed, blood dripping from the side of his mouth.

"No! Jaguarpaw don't leave me!" Crimsonpaw wailed, her ears blurring with tears. "Please stay." She wrapped her paws around the golden tom, his blood soaking her pelt.

"I'm already gone." Jaguarpaw let out a sigh, his eyes closing as the life drained out of him.

Crimsonpaw pawed at him desperately. "No... Jaguarpaw.." Tears slipped down her cheeks and she gritted her teeth against a sob, hugging him closer to her. "You're my only friend.. You can't leave me now.. I don't want to be alone."

The motionless tom didn't respond, his body slowly growing cold. Crimsonpaw's tears dripped onto his muzzle and she let out a quiet sob, barely listening to the sounds of Flarepaw fighting the two Lightclan apprentices.

She only looked up when there was a pained howl and she saw Flarepaw chasing both apprentices away with a fierce snarl. Once the two had left, the golden she cat doubled back to Crimsonpaw.

"Oh no." Flarepaw murmured, sighing as she saw Jaguarpaw's body. "I'm-" she let out a small cough, wincing in pain, "-sorry."

"We have to bring him back to camp." Crimsonpaw wailed, her cheeks wet with tears, not even noticing her sister's discomfort.

Flarepaw nodded. "Yeah.. Put him on my back." She meowed wearily, crouching down to let Crimsonpaw drag the dead tom onto her back, her wings acting as extra support. Crimsonpaw grunted from the effort of carrying Jaguarpaw, more pitiful cries leaving her lips as she finally managed to drag him onto Flarepaw's back.

Flarepaw started back towards the border, walking painfully slowly. Crimsonpaw sighed. Jaguarpaw was probably quite heavy.

The sisters crossed the border, immediately being attacked by the moorland wind. Crimsonpaw saw Flarepaw stagger sideways with a small gasp and she only then realised blood dripping from a wound on Flarepaw's neck.

Running to her sister's side, Crimsonpaw pushed Jaguarpaw off so that he tumbled onto the floor. Flarepaw moved away, seeing where Crimsonpaw's gaze was going, and her wing quickly moved in front of her neck, covering it. Crimsonpaw shoved her sister's wing away to see a deep gash on her neck, dark red blood seeping steadily through her fur.

"Flarepaw!" She gasped in horror. "You're hurt!"

"I'm fine. Let's get back to camp so I can be healed." Flarepaw muttered, covering her wound again and turning to pick Jaguarpaw back up.

Crimsonpaw clawed at the ground. "Let me carry him! You're too injured!"

Flarepaw gave her a long, tired look before sighing and dragging Jaguarpaw onto her back. Crimsonpaw gasped at the weight,

stumbling forwards. Her front paws fell underneath her and her muzzle slammed into the ground, Jaguarpaw's cold, dead body rolling limply onto her head.

Jaguarpaw was gently moved away from her by Flarepaw's wing before her sister placed the dead tom back on her own back. "Just let me carry him, okay?" She sighed.

Crimsonpaw sighed in defeat. She hated not being strong enough to help anyone. Even at nearly twelve moons old, she was still viewed as a kit. She couldn't bear the weight of a cat who was only slightly bigger than her. Everyone had to do everything for her.

Once again, an image of life as a rogue in twolegplace played in her mind. This time, however, Jaguarpaw was erased from the scene and it seemed a lot more dreary. Crimsonpaw knew she could never find the courage to make the decision to leave her clan, so she had to stay and face her troubles, no matter how bad they were.

Flarepaw stumbled forwards, further toward camp. Her tail dragged behind her, her flanks heaving from the effort. Crimsonpaw padded beside her sister, letting her lean on her. The red she cat's assistance did little to help.

They were halway to camp when Flarepaw collapsed on the ground, panting. Jaguarpaw's body rolled off her, flopping in an awkward angle. Crimsonpaw circled her sister. "Flarepaw? Flarepaw get up!" She nudged the orange she cat with her nose, her eyes wide.

Flarepaw covered her muzzle with a paw and murmured. "Just.. l-let me rest for.. a bit.." Her voice trembled as she spoke, her body shaking.

Crimsonpaw peered at her neck wound to see it was still bleeding heavily. "Oh no.." She mumbled, staring around the empty moorland for someone to help. "We're still too far away from camp for them to hear us."

"Stop worrying." Flarepaw stuttered, wincing as she spoke. "I'll be f-fine.." Her yellow eyes fluttered closed and she let out a painful sigh before she reopening her eyes. Looking up at her sister, Flarepaw

murmured. "Run back to c-camp.. Get.. help. Leave me here, I p-promise I won't leave you Crimsonp-paw."

Crimsonpaw felt tears prick her vision as she dipped her head and turned to face the direction of camp. Without another glance behind her the red she cat pelted home, her thick tail whipping behind her as the wind tugged at her, fighting to push her back towards Flarepaw. *I have to get Wishberry!* She screamed inwardly, glancing briefly at the sky as she struggled against the wind. "Please Starclan! I have to save my sister!"

The wind only got stronger and Crimsonpaw stumbled backwards with a gasp. "No!" She screeched, trying to fight against the wind. It was no use, so Crimsonpaw glanced back to where Flarepaw was to see she was still laying there, motionless. Her brilliant orange wings swayed in the breeze, but they moved stiffly, as if something were holding them back. Crimsonpaw narrowed her eyes and started running back to her sister. This time the wind assisted her, and she was at Flarepaw's side in heartbeats.

Crimsonpaw stared down at her sister to see that the orange she cat's eyes were shut, her jaws still parted from her final gasps of breath. One of her paws were outstretched, reaching for the direction of camp where Crimsonpaw had run. The blood from her neck wound had stopped running, her entire neck covered in thick, drying blood.

The red she cat crumbled to the ground beside her sister, her amber eyes wide and tear filled. "No!" She yowled, the wind yanking fiercely at her pelt as she screamed. "Flarepaw!" She wailed, wrapping her paws around her sister. "Don't leave me as well!" She cried, fresh tears rolling freely down her cheeks.

The wind quickly died into a soft breeze that calmly licked at her pelt, as if Starclan had finally grown to pity her in her misery.

Hugging her cold, dead sister closer to her, Crimsonpaw melted into a troubled sleep.

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# Chapter 33

Her dream was dark, empty, almost menacing.

Crimsonpaw seemed to float there for quiet a while before she was jerked awake by a warmth being wrapped around her crumpled body.

Blinking her eyes open, she felt warmth all around her. Crimsonpaw shifted around a bit, wincing as her curled up body screamed in protest. She was still beside Flarepaw's body, except there were two more bodies resting beside her. Falconpaw and Bouncepaw. Her brothers hugged her tightly from both sides, their wings joined together to create a red and blue shield from the cold wind.

Sensing her movement, the two toms lifted their heads from Flarepaw's stiff pelt and looked at their little sister. Falconpaw murmured. "What happened?"

Crimsonpaw forced down a feeble sob as the memories were thrown at her and she stuttered. "W-we were in Lightclan's t-territory and we were at-attacked by two apprentices." She gritted her teeth as more tears promised to spill. "Flarepaw saved us.. B-but Jaguarpaw died. Th-then Flarepaw died." She broke into a fit of sobs, burying her face in Falconpaw's chest.

The black and blue tom wrapped his paw around her, sighing. "It okay, Crimsonpaw. It's okay."

*But it's not okay, is it?* She wanted to silently retort back. *You probably hate me for letting Flarepaw die.*

"You're such a disgrace to this family." Solarflare's voice suddenly growled from behind her and she peeled herself away from Falconpaw's embrace to see her mother glaring angrily down at her. "Losing your wings and then killing your own sister! What's next? The destruction of our entire clan?"

"I didn't kill her!" Crimsonpaw cried, her amber eyes wide as she cowered under her mother's stern gaze.

"You went out on a mouse-brained adventure with your rogue friend that got Flarepaw killed, therefore it's your fault!" Solarflare snarled, lashing her tail. "Now leave before you cause anymore trouble!"

Crimsonpaw ducked her head and darted away from her brothers, back into the merciless wind that had picked up since she had slept. Sunset was nearing, and long shadows were being cast throughout the moorland. A few of her clan mates stood back and watched the winged family as they mourned for Flarepaw, none of them taking any notice of her. *I bet they still wouldn't notice me if I jumped off The Cliff right now.* She thought bitterly, storming away in the direction of camp.

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A full day after Flarepaw and Jaguarpaw's deathes, Crimsonpaw's warrior ceremony arrived. Frozenstar had already named Bouncefoot and Falconheart, now it was Crimsonpaw's turn.

"Crimsonpaw, step forwards." The Flameclan leader meowed, flicking her tail for the red she cat to approach. "I, Frozenstar, leader of Flameclan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice. She has trained hard to understand the ways of your noble code, and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn."

Crimsonpaw beamed happily, for once she forgot about all the death of the day before and focused purely on the fact that she had made it to being a warrior. She had done it.

"Crimsonpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and to protect and defend your Clan, even at the cost of your life?" Frozenstar looked down at her.

"I do."

"Then by the powers of StarClan, I give you your warrior name.

From this moment you will be known as Crimsonfur. StarClan honors your determination and courage, and we welcome you as a full warrior of Flameclan." Frozenstar sent her former apprentice a small smile and started the cheer of her new name.

"Crimsonfur! Falconheart! Bouncefoot!" The clan cheered, raising their voices to the sky.

The three siblings smiled proudly as their new names were called. They had made it.

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# Chapter 34

Crimsonfur yawned as she emerged from the warriors den. A day after their warrior ceremonies had gone by, and it was officially Crimsonfur's second day as a warrior. She wasn't thrilled for the dawn patrol she had been appointed to that morning. She would've much preferred laying in her nest until sunhigh.

Shadowtail was already waiting for her, with Falconheart sitting beside him. Once she reached them, the deputy turned and trotted away, his tail flicking for them to follow. Crimsonfur sighed and padded behind her brother as he followed the dark furred tom.

They trekked over the moorland hills, the wind already picking up as the sun rose above the mountains in the distance. Crimsonfur gritted her teeth as they passed the blood pools that had stained the ground, forever marking Flarepaw and Jaguarpaw's death. She glanced at Falconheart to see he, too, was looking at the blood stains. Her brother's spiked tail flicked sadly and his head drooped slightly, ears flattening. Crimsonfur felt a pang of sorrow for her brother. *I'm not the only one suffering.*

The red furred she cat quickened her pace, catching up with Falconheart. She looked up at him as they walked together, her amber gaze searching his face. "Are you okay?"

"Been better." He replied simply, his voice sharp with grief. His blue eyes met her's briefly and he offered her a reassuring smile, leaning into her as they walked. "Don't worry, she's watching over us in Starclan."

"What about Jaguarpaw?" She sighed, flattening her ears.

Falconheart's smile faded in a heartbeat. "He's gone forever, he won't be in Starclan."

Crimsonfur lowered her head to look at the ground. Everyone hated Jaguarpaw just because he was a rogue. It was unfair.

Suddenly there was a screech in front of them and Crimsonfur snapped her gaze up to see Shadowtail had disappeared. They quickened their pace and emerged into a clearing to see Shadowtail laying on his side, a thick pool of blood pooling around him. Crimsonfur looked up to see a brown tipped tail disappearing into the bushes beyond.

"Hey! You! Get back here!" She hissed, leaping after the cat. She dashed through the bushes and stared around the undergrowth. They had walked into the thicker, foresty end of Flameclan territory. It gave many hiding places. She growled. "Don't run from me, murderer!" She snarled, glaring around for the black tail with a brown tip.

Nobody replied, and after a while, Crimsonfur sighed and returned to Falconheart's side as he watched over Shadowtail's dead body.

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Crimsonfur and Falconheart returned to camp carrying Shadowtail between them. The moment they trekked into the main clearing, shocked gasps and yowls erupted around them and their clan mates quickly rushed around them, circling the deputy's dead body as he was set down.

"What happened?" Frozenstar demanded, pushing to the front of the crowd with a look of horror on her face. Solarflare appeared behind her leader, her blue eyes wide.

Crimsonfur opened her mouth to explain, but Falconheart flicked his tail over her mouth and spoke first, glancing briefly at her, silently telling her to keep quiet. "Shadowtail went ahead of us and was attacked by what we presume was a rogue. There were no signs of the killer anywhere, they had vanished."

Frozenstar hung her head, sighing. "Too much death... Starclan has cursed us." Then she looked back at the two young warriors standing guard at Shadowtail's body. "Set up the vigil while I discuss with the senior warriors who the next deputy will be."

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# Chapter 35

The vigil had been set up.

Crimsonfur sighed and sat back to relax, pausing when she heard a yowl from the leader's den. *What in the name of Starclan?* She wondered, pricking her ears and glancing across at the den.

Standing up, she crept towards the den and peered through a small gap to see Frozenstar and the senior warriors sitting in a circle around a blood red feather. They all murmured to one another, worried looks on their faces. Frozenstar was shaking her head.

Then a she cat's voice rang around the den. "The next Flameclan deptuty shall be a cat made of Crimson."

Gasps rang around the den, including Crimsonfur's own gasp of shock. *What?! That doesn't make sense!* She shook her head in disbelief. She had only *just* become a warrior! She didn't even have an apprentice! Who was the strange cat telling them she had to be deputy?

"You can't tell the voice of your mentor?" A voice rasped in her ear, and she spun around to see the dim image of Glitch standing before. Her white eyes gleamed mischievously and she meowed. "So now you'll be deputy, don't screw this up. This is your chance for power!"

Crimsonfur flinched at the venom in Glitch's mew. "But why did you do this?"

"You've always wanted to be stronger than others, right?" Glitch circled her, the scent of the Dark Forest floating around her. "To overcome your fear of being hurt by your clan mates. This is your chance. As deputy, you can punish the bullies! You can persuade your leader to kick them out, just as you did with Thunderfoot and Pigeonfeather! Make your enemies cower at your feet! Feel the power!" The white she cat finished her speech, panting slightly with

wide eyes as she stared down at Crimsonfur.

The red she cat took a slow step back. "Uhm... I never wanted to be deputy.."

"You will, just wait and see! Wait until you feel the power! Then you'll thank me!" Glitch snarled and faded away in a heartbeat, silence falling around her.

Crimsonfur blinked slowly. "Okay.." She sighed, glancing around the clearing to see that some cats were giving her weird looks. They must've heard her talking to the invisible Glitch.

Her attention turned to the leader's den to see Frozenstar and her senior warriors emerge, their faces stern. The light furred leader climbed onto the rock above the den and called for a clan meeting. Everyone gathered swiftly, impatiently awaiting their leader's announcement.

With a deep breath, Frozenstar started the ceremony. "I say these words before StarClan, so that the spirits of our warrior ancestors may hear and approve of my choice. The new deputy of Flameclan is Crimsonfur."

Shocked yowls erupted within the clan, and all eyes turned to Crimsonfur. She flinched under their outraged stares, shrinking into herself. Solarflare yowled from the back of the crowd. "Are you crazy?!"

"She's been a warrior for less than a moon!" Embergaze snarled.

"I'm a better deputy than *her!"* Burningfire growled, his tail lashing.

"Quiet, all of you!" Frozenstar hissed. "We received a sign from Starclan, she is the rightful deputy!"

The clan grew quiet, the warriors murmuring together in confusion. Crimsonfur sighed hopelessly. *It wasn't Starclan, it was Glitch...*

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# Chapter 36

"The gathering is tonight." Frozenstar meowed to Crimsonfur. "Gather the patrol and meet me at the camp exit."

"But who's on the patrol?" The deputy asked, her amber eyes gleaming in the darkness of the leader's den. Crimsonfur was still getting accustomed to being deputy, and Frozenstar seemed to be throwing all the duties of both leader and deputy onto her shoulders. *Did Shadowtail receive the same treatment? Or is this exclusively for me?* The red she cat sighed inwardly.

Frozenstar's grey tail twitched and she shrugged. "It's your choice, you are deputy now."

Crimsonfur opened her mouth to argue- that she didn't want to be deputy anymore- but closed it almost immediately. Glitch would never forgive her if she let her place go. She had to remain as Flameclan's deputy. With a barely audible grumble, she dipped her head. "Alright, thank you Frozenstar."

"Don't thank me, Starclan chose you." Her leader replied, a hint of scorn in her voice.

It took every inch of her strength to resist the growl rising in her throat as she stalked out of the den, into the cool after-sunhigh air. The days were slowly getting colder, leaf-bare was near.

Crimsonfur surveyed the clearing, her gaze travelling over her clan mates. Very few accepted her as deputy, even after a half-moon had passed. They all thought she was too young- which was true- and that she wasn't strong enough for the burden- which was also true.

Falconheart did his best to help her, but her brother could only do so much. He had even offered to take her place as deputy, and Crimsonfur had struggled greatly to decline, wishing so much for her brother to be deputy instead. But she didn't want to betray Glitch. Starclan knew what the Dark Forest she cat would do to her

if she went against her wishes.

After more visits to that forest, Crimsonfur had concluded that the Dark Forest was the place that held the evil cats. The ones who were blocked from Starclan. Many cats there had changed their names to rogue names, taking on new identities to escape their past warrior lives. *Maybe I will too, once I make my way there.* She thought bitterly. Crimsonfur expected to end up in the Dark Forest if she continued to stay with Glitch. Perhaps she could somehow find a way to redeem herself so that Starclan would take her in.

She felt a nudge on her shoulder, snapping out of her thoughts to see Bouncefoot waving a paw in her face. "Crim?" He queried, his red eyes locked with hers.

"What?" She asked, slapping his paw away with a small hiss.

Her brother gave a small bounce on his paws and he asked eagerly. "Can I help you choose the cats for the gathering?"

Crimsonfur shrugged, sighing. "Yeah, sure."

"Great!" Bouncefoot grinned and started listing the cats he wanted to take on the patrol.

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The moon shone high in the sky when Flameclan arrived at the gathering clearing. The other three clans were bunched together in the tight space, muttering to one another as Flameclan squeezed their way through.

Crimsonfur sighed. *We need to find a new gathering clearing. This one is too small.* She pushed past two Monsterclan toms, earning sharp hisses from them.

"Watch it, kit!" One of the two toms hissed at her as she stalked away to get to where the deputies sat.

Crimsonfur lashed her tail but ignored them, trying not to let their words get to her. She reached the base of the GreatLog and sat down at the end of the line of three deputies. They all turned to

look at her in surprise. "Where is Shadowtail?" A grey tom muttered.

"Uh, he died.." Crimsonfur replied softly.

"And *you're* the new deputy?" The same tom shook his head. "Frozenstar must've lost it, you look barely old enough to be a warrior."

"Starclan sent a sign." Crimsonfur murmured in reply, flattening her ears at the hostility the other deputy was giving her.

"Drop it, Stonefeather." The Magiclan deputy muttered, her light brown fur bristling. "I was chosen young too."

"Not *that* young!" Stonefeather growled in reply, lashing his tail.

She rolled her eyes and looked at Crimsonfur. "Lightclan are mouse-brains, am I right?" She chuckled.

Crimsonfur chuckled faintly as Stonefeather let out a low growl of annoyance, shuffling away to let the Magiclan deputy sit next to her.

"So, what's your name?" She asked, smiling down at her.

"Crimsonfur." She replied.

"Oh, that's a nice name, it's really suits you." The Magiclan she cat smiled. "My name is Leafmist, I'm the Magiclan deputy."

"Nice to meet you." Crimsonfur smiled softly, glad to be with such a nice she cat. She wondered how differently Leafmist would have react had she known about her heritage and past.

"How long have you been deputy for?" Leafmist asked after some silence.

"Half a moon."

She smiled. "I've been deputy for a moon more than you. Stonefeather was so upset about it, we nearly started a fight."

"We did not!" Stonefeather cut in.

"Yes we did!" She giggled back. "If the leaders hadn't stopped us, we would've fought! All because of your hatred toward young cats!"

"I don't hate young cats." Stonefeather muttered in reply. "I just don't think they should be trusted with power at such a young age."

"Pfft." Leafmist rolled her eyes before turning back to Crimsonfur. "So, is being deputy fun?"

She forced a smile and replied. "Yeah, it's fun."

"Great." She purred. "I've always wanted to be deputy, and maybe someday leader."

"And then I'll be your deputy!" A brown tabby tom trotted up to them, smiling brightly, his green eyes gleaming in the moonlight. "Right?"

"Of course, Rabbitclaw." Leafmist purred. "I would never go back on a promise."

"What about me?" A younger brown tom appeared behind Rabbitclaw, his blue eyes round as he stood in the shadow of the older tom. "Can I be deputy too?"

"Maybe when Rabbitclaw becomes leader." Leafmist replied, smiling at the young tom.

Rabbitclaw grinned at the smaller tom. "You wanna be Ratstar, huh?" He chuckled. "You gotta wait a while first, because I'm gonna be leader for a long time."

"You wish!" Leafmist smirked. "I'm going to outlive you all!"

"Ha! As if!" The litte brown tom replied.

"Let the gathering begin!" Frozenstar announced, silencing their debate about the future in an instant.

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The announcements finished and the leaders sat back, letting the clan warriors below them chat for a while longer under the bright moonlight.

Crimsonfur made her way through the crowd to find her brothers. Leafmist had gone off to chat with her friends, leaving Crimsonfur on her own. She passed a bunch of apprentices, spotting the two who had attacked her and Jaguarpaw on that fateful day of Flarepaw's death.

Slowing, she pricked her ears to listen to their conversation. "-then Wildpaw actually killed the Flameclan tom!"

Wildpaw snorted. "Greenpaw! Don't say it so loudly!"

"But it's true!" Greenpaw laughed, nudging her clan mate.

"Whatever." Wildpaw rolled his eyes. "But, back to the story... One of the winged cats appeared and attacked us. We were defeated, but Greenpaw managed to take a chunk of the orange she cat's throat with her!" He grinned.

Hatred rushed through Crimsonfur, blotting out all other emotions. *How dare they boast about my sister's death as if they were simply talking about catching prey!* She stalked right up to the two, growling.

Greenpaw turned and saw her. "Oh! It's you!" She grinned. "How's your winged friend?"

"You killed her!" Crimsonfur snarled, her claws unsheathing. "You're going to pay!" She lunged for the white she cat, her teeth bared.

The moment her claws made contact with Greenpaw, teeth latched into her thick red tail and yanked her away painfully. She yelped and stumbled backwards, spinning around to see Falconheart holding her tail in his jaws, a look of horror on her brother's face.

"Crimsonfur." He muttered, letting her tail drop. "Don't attack cats at a gathering." He shook his head in disappointment, and Crimsonfur's eyes widened.

"She killed Flarepaw!" She gasped. "Falconheart how could you? You're her brother too! Do you not care?"

"Enough!" Frozenstar snarled from the GreatLog. "We are leaving. Now." The Flameclan leader spat, glaring at Crimsonfur.

Crimsonfur didn't meet Frozenstar's gaze, instead she glared at her brother. "I hate you." She muttered at him.

Falconheart's tail twitched. "Crim-"

"No! Don't ever talk to me again!" She snarled, whirling around to leave the gathering clearing.

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# Chapter 37

Crimsonfur shivered as she awoke in the Dark Forest. "Glitch?" She called, looking around.

"Hello." The scarred she cat emerged, smiling at her. "How was the gathering?"

"Awful." Crimsonfur hissed, opening her mouth to explain, but Glitch shook her head.

"I saw what happened." She sighed. "It's a shame Falconheart had to stop you like that."

Anger coursed through her at the mention of her brother and she bared her teeth. "Do not talk about him." She spat.

Glitch laid her tail around Crimsonfur. "Very well." She murmured, leading Crimsonfur through the shadowy forest. "Why don't we do some training?"

Crimsonfur nodded, eager to distract herself from the events of that night. Frozenstar had told her that she would be given her punishment in the morning, sending her deputy straight to the warriors den like a kit on time-out. She wasn't looking forward to waking up to the shame her punishment would bring her.

Glitch led her to a large, empty clearing and stood back. "Let's work on your knowledge of the shadows first, if you truly are the one meant to take them on, you'll need to know how to handle them."

Crimsonfur nodded, listening intently. She didn't know much about the shadows. Maybe this could clear up what little she knew.

"The shadows are quite fragile things, and they sort of have a mind of their own." Glitch let a few strands swirl around her paws. "They hold great potential, most of it locked away from us. Even I do not know the extent of their power. Perhaps you could be the key to

unlocking the secrets."
They were first created by a legendary she cat, who went by the name of Shadow. She was the cat who made them what they are known as today."

Glitch paused for a moment, letting the shadows slowly slither towards Crimsonfur. "It is tradition that she cats control the shadows, no tom has ever been known to have them."

"Why?"

"We don't know." Glitch replied. "I decided that toms might not compatible with the shadows."

Crimsonfur shivered. *Strange.* Then, she remembered something. "Spark mentioned something to do with the Moon Mist, and converting the shadows.. What did she mean by that?"

Glitch's face hardened to a scowl. "The shadows were adapted from the Moon Mist, a substance similar to the shadows, but the complete opposite. The Shadows can cause nightmares and kill, where the Moon Mist makes dreams and heals."
Shadow stole some Moon Mist from an unknown holder, and converted them into Shadows. We obtain more shadows by taking the souls of cats, whereas the Moon Mist holders take their powers from the moon. The Moon Mist is weak, only able to grow stronger under a clear, full moon. Here in the Dark Forest there is no moon, killing off most of Spark's mist. We Shadow holders grow strong everywhere, as long as there are cats around."

"Whoa.." Crimsonfur murmured in awe, letting all the information sink in.

"That's enough for tonight. I'll let you rest now and teach you more tomorrow." Glitch meowed, letting Crimsonfur fade away into a deep sleep.

---

After a long- and much needed- sleep, Crimsonfur awoke in her nest with a yawn. The warriors den was empty, except for Bouncefoot

who was snoring beside her. She reached over and tapped her brother awake, sitting up in her nest to stretch.

"Huh?" Bouncefoot muttered, lifting his head to look at Crimsonfur. "What is it?"

"Just thought I'd wake you.." She shrugged, sighing. "Do you think Frozenstar has forgotten?"

"About the incident at the gathering?" He snorted. "No way."

Crimsonfur frowned and rolled her eyes. "Maybe if I stay in here all day, that should be enough for her..?"

"I doubt it." Her brother chuckled and stood up. "Come on, let's go see what she has in store for you."

Crimsonfur padded after Bouncefoot as he left the warriors den. She narrowed her eyes as late morning sunlight hit her, looking around the main clearing. Most cats seemed to be out of camp on patrol. Only a few remained, including Frozenstar, who sat stiffly by her den. Once she spotted Crimsonfur she stood up and strode up to her deputy.

"Crimsonfur." She meowed sternly. "If you don't start waking up at reasonable times I'm going to have to remove you from your place."

Crimsonfur bit her lip, gratefully letting Bouncefoot reply for her. "But she was chosen by Starclan!" He meowed at his leader, his red eyes narrowed. "You wouldn't go against Starclan, would you?"

Frozenstar shook her head. "Of course not." She replied, her whiskers twitching as she looked at the two young warriors. "I only have doubts that Crimsonfur is actually the rightful deputy. Perhaps Starclan made a mistake."

Crimsonfur cut in before Bouncefoot could respond again. "I am the one. I know it."

"Then start acting like one." Frozenstar's tail lashed. "Attacking an apprentice at the gathering last night was unacceptable. I will not allow my warriors to show that kind of behaviour in front of the

other clans."

Crimsonfur dipped her head in shame. "It won't happen again." She promised.

"I'm sure it won't." Frozenstar muttered. "This time you do not get a punishment, but next time you will pay dearly." Then she turned and walked back to her den, leaving the deputy and her brother alone in the clearing.

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# Chapter 38

Later that day, Crimsonfur was munching hungrily on a mouse when she heard pawsteps behind her. She looked up to see Solarflare approaching. She grumbled inwardly, quickly swallowing her food as her mother seated herself beside her daughter.

The winged she cat silently picked up a rabbit from the prey pile and settled down next to Crimsonfur, her gaze glued to her food. Crimsonfur frowned, watching her mother. "What do you want?" She asked.

Solarflare finally looked at Crimsonfur. "Do you know how disappointed I am in you? I really thought you would be a good cat, but it seems that you're going the wrong way."

"Wrong way?" Crimsonfur echoed, narrowing her eyes. *Does she know about Glitch?*

"No matter what you do you always cause trouble for your clan mates. Whether it is killing them or making them look like fools." Solarflare muttered, glancing back at her prey.

Crimsonfur felt a flash of anger and she snapped. "I did not kill Flarepaw!"

"Don't give me that excuse again, you caused her death and I'll never forgive you for it." Her mother seethed, baring her teeth.

Crimsonfur growled in frustration. "I'm never going to get through to you am I? Everything I do is wrong! You always see the worst in me! And this is all because of me losing my wings!"

Solarflare lashed her tail. "It's not just the wings."

"Then what is it?" Crimsonfur demanded, her ears pinned to the back of her head.

Solarflare dug her claws into the ground and muttered. "I can't say."

"Why not?!"

Her mother let out a sigh and hissed. "If I did it would only cause more trouble."

The red furred she cat let out a snarl of anger and unsheathed her claws, raising her paw to claw her mother's eyes out. As her paw flew to the ginger she cat's face, a blue wing knocked it away. She was thrown off balance, falling onto her side.

Looking up, Crimsonfur saw Falconheart standing protectively in front of Solarflare, his eyes narrowed in anger. "Attacking your own mother now?" Her brother growled.

Crimsonfur gritted her teeth, letting out a shriek of rage. "Get out of the way! This is none of your concern!"

"No! I will not let you harm my mother!" Falconheart hissed back, his lips drawn back in a snarl, his ears flattened. The two horns on his head glinted in the sunlight, aimed warningly at her.

*"Your* mother? She isn't mine anymore?" Crimsonfur's thick red tail lashed and she glared at her brother, her amber eyes shining with resentment.

"Not until you calm down and stop causing trouble!" Falconheart snarled, taking a step closer to Crimsonfur, his blue, scaly wings raised in caution.

Crimsonfur let out another shriek of frustration and yowled at Falconheart. "I hate you! You are not my brother anymore! If you don't step away right now I will hurt you!" She glared up at him, her heart pounding in her chest, adrenaline racing through her, thundering in her ears.

Falconheart stood his ground, teeth bared. "Try to hurt me and you'll be sorry."

Crimsonfur growled and crouched down, lunging for her brother. Her claws flew for his face, her amber eyes filled with hatred. Falconheart ducked down at she lunged, surging upwards once he was under her. His horns dug into her stomach as he slammed his

head into her, throwing her sideways onto the ground. Crimsonfur hit the ground with a gasp, immediately curling into a protective ball as her belly throbbed from the wounds her brother had inflicted on her.

Falconheart approached her slowly, his blue eyes narrowed. She whimpered in pain as blood seeped slowly through her fur, her forepaws struggling to cover the wound and stop the bleeding. She stared up at the black and blue tom, wondering what he was about to do next. She didn't know anymore. She had never seen him so angry and violent towards anyone.

"Go to the medicine den and get that fixed." He spat at her, turning around and stalking back to Solarflare. His tail brushed against her as he turned, the sharp points of the spikes grazing her ears.

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"S-Stop it hurts!" Crimsonfur cried as Wishberry pressed the damp moss to her belly. Tears pricked her eyes, her gaze blurring as she writhed in the nest in the medicine den.

"I need to clean the dust and dirt out." The medicine cat muttered. "Stop moving and it'll be better."

Crimsonfur tried as hard as she could to stop moving, and she was fairly successful, except for her lashing tail. Her cheeks were damp with tears, her mouth dry from the fits of sobs she had struggled through in those moments she had laid in her ball where Falconheart had left her. Wishberry had eventually appeared, helping her into her den to treat her stab wounds.

"Ah!" Crimsonfur flinched, whimpering feebly as Wishberry applied the herbs to her wounds.

"Great Starclan Crimsonfur, you're our deputy, toughen up a bit." The medicine hissed, finally wrapping her belly in cobwebs.

The red she cat bit her lip, inhaling shakily as the medicine cat stepped back. "Thank you.." She murmured.

"No need to thank me." Wishberry meowed, padding into her herb

store. "I'm always here to heal my clan mates."

---

The moorland wind cut into her fur, making her shiver. The territory was empty, no prey or patrols in sight. Her stomach wound stung as she walked slowly down into a small dip, emerging again on the other side. She stood rigidly ontop of the hill, looking around the territory. She was heading towards twolegplace without realising it. *Well, I know what my paws want me to do.* But she shook her head and stepped away from her original path, padding toward the Monsterclan border instead.

As she padded closer to the looming forest beyond, Crimsonfur was reminded about Jaguarpaw's death. She didn't want to go near Lightclan after what they let their apprentices do. *They should be punished!* She lashed her tail in frustration. *But I can't do anything about it!* Alone, she could only wallow in her sadness.

Suddenly, she heard a shriek nearby and she spun around to see a bird flying up into the air, a cat leaping after it. The cat had dark fur, his brown-tipped tail lashing as he reached for the fleeing bird. *That tail...* Crimsonfur narrowed her eyes as the cat succeeded in catching the bird, dropping into the long grass out of sight.

"I know that tail." Crimsonfur muttered. Then she gasped. *Shadowtail's death!* That's where she had seen it before! This was the cat that had killed Shadowtail! She moved to confront the cat, but stopped short. *What if Glitch made him kill Shadowtail as part of the plan to make me deputy?* It wouldn't be fair to attack him after his murder caused good for her. *Plus, I can't fight against a cat bigger than me. If it turns into a battle, I might get the same end as Shadowtail.*

So Crimsonfur turned away, pretending she hadn't ever seen the tom before.

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# Chapter 39

Two days after the encounter with Falconheart, Crimsonfur was nibbling on a rabbit by the warriors den. Bouncefoot and Falconheart sat by the prey pile, chatting together. Obsidianpelt and Solarflare were out on a patrol with Ashwhisper and Cindernose. Frozenstar was napping in her den, and the rest of the warriors were either patrolling the borders, hunting or sleeping.

The Flameclan deputy sighed as she watched her brothers. Their tails twitched and they smiled as they talked about inaudible nonsense. Anger still surged through her at just the sight of Falconheart, and seeing him with Bouncefoot didn't make it any better.

Wishberry emerged from the medicine den, her gaze flicking towards Crimsonfur for a heartbeat before she trotted out of camp. Cats seemed to still be avoiding her. *What have I done to deserve all this?* She wondered, taking a bite from her rabbit. *What will it take for Starclan to take pity on me?*

But maybe they never would, maybe Crimsonfur had to turn to someone else to place her faith with. *Glitch has always been nice to me. She helps me through hard times.* It seemed the Dark Forest was the place where she could be happy. Starclan were useless cats sitting on their rumps all day. They didn't do a thing to help the cats on the ground. They watched joyfully as their clans suffered, not bothering to do a thing about it.

"Crimsonfur?"

She blinked, looking up at the cat standing before her. *Wow I zoned out quite a bit...* Her amber eyes focused on the cat, fixing on Falconheart's blue gaze.

"What?" She demanded, her voice immediately turning venomous.

Her brother sighed faintly and muttered. "I'm sorry..."

"Oh you better be sorry! You could've killed me!" Crimsonfur snarled, climbing to her paws so that she could meet his gaze properly. "I can't believe you would take Solarflare's side over mine!"

"I didn't want you to hurt her." Falconheart reasoned.

"But she's allowed to hurt me?" The red she cat growled back, her thick tail lashing as she glared up at her brother. "Am I expected to take all the insults and beatings over and over without any kind of retaliation?! Is my life of any value at all?"

Falconheart's ears flattened and he muttered. "Solarflare's never hurt you."

"She has, and so has everyone else! And the only cat who ever helped me is dead!" She scored her claws across the ground in frustration. "I do have feelings, you know."

Falconheart growled and lashed his tail. "You're being over-dramatic!"

"No I'm not!" Crimsonfur shrieked, her voice rising to a high-pitched whine.

Bouncefoot suddenly appeared, stepping inbetween the two littermates. "Stop it!" He hissed, glaring at both of them.

Crimsonfur let out a huff and spun around, stomping into the warriors den. Falconheart's voice hissed behind her. "That's right, run away from your problems like the cowardly kit you are."

---

Crimsonfur tried to sleep away her anger, curled in a tight ball, snuggled deep into her mossy nest. The only thing she accomplished was a messy pelt. When she finally gave up trying to sleep, the red she cat rose her head and sighed heavily, looking around. The warriors den was empty, and there was no sound from camp. *Hm.*

Carefully, she climbed out of her nest and shuffled out of the den,

hurriedly licking down some fur that stood up. Shaking out the rest of her thick pelt, Crimsonfur looked around the main clearing. Many warriors were crowded around the centre of the clearing, their heads bowed. Crimsonfur narrowed her eyes in confusion and crept closer to the ground. She saw her brothers' wings in the centre, Bouncefoot and Falconheart sitting next to each other. Solarflare and Obsidianpelt was nowhere to be found.

*How long was I in my nest?* She wondered. *And why didn't I hear any of this?* Crimsonfur pushed to the front of the crowd, stopping abruptly when she spotted Solarflare's and Obsidianpelt's limp and lifeless bodies laying on the ground. She gasped and muttered. "What happened?"

"A Lightclan patrol happened." Bouncefoot mumbled, his ears flattened as he glanced at his sister. "The deputy thought we were trespassing and.." He looked down at his parents' bodies.

Crimsonfur bared her teeth. "Lightclan again." She shook her head. Lightclan needed to be put in there place. Enough was enough, they had killed too many and gotten away with it. She didn't care about her parents' death, she had to avenge Jaguarpaw and Flarepaw and stop Lightclan from murdering anyone else from her clan.

Stonefeather needed to be killed, along with Greenpaw and Wildpaw. They were murderers. A disgrace to the warrior code.

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# Chapter 40

Her bones ached as she stepped out of the warriors den, quickly wrapped in a cool blanket of leaf-bare air. Crimsonfur breathed in deeply, sighing as a faint cloud formed before her muzzle. Spikepaw had proven to be hard work the day before. Her new apprentice was refusing to learn the required battle stances for his basic training; they had practiced from dawn to dusk and gotten no where.

His bright blue eyes appeared in her face, making her leap back in surprise. "Eek!" Crimsonfur squeaked, stumbling backwards as her apprentice batted her face frantically with his paws.

"It's time for training!" His thick, spiky fur was bushed up against the cold, making him look like a giant fuzzball. "C'mon Crimsonfur! I wanna learn how to catch rabbits today!"

The red furred she cat's ears drooped and she sighed in exasperation. "Spikepaw.. It's not even past dawn yet. I have deputy duties to get started."

"Aw, when will you be done?" Her apprentice bounded across the frozen ground, his tail lashing with energy. "I wanna start training as soon as possible!"

*I don't...* Crimsonfur's tail twitched in annoyance. *Why did Frozenstar give Spikepaw to me? Why does Falconheart get Brightpaw? She's so quiet and patient with her mentor...*

Suddenly there was a terrible yowl from the leaders den. Crimsonfur pricked her ears, startled by the yowl. *Oh no. Frozenstar must be getting worse...* The grey dappled she cat had fallen sick with greencough, and she was on her last remaining life.

Over six moons had passed since her parents unexpected death, and Lightclan had been causing trouble on the border. They had recently had a skirmish over a slice of moorland that Lightclan

wanted. Flameclan managed to beat them back, but Lightclan were relentlessly trying to get it again. With Frozenstar ill, it was Crimsonfur's responsibility to find a solution to the problem. She wanted Lightclan to pay, but launching a full attack would have to wait until she ascended to leadership.

Padding into Frozenstar's den, Crimsonfur spotted the grey dappled she cat twitching in her nest. Wishberry sat at her leader's side, her bright amber eyes creased in worry. She looked up at the deputy as she approached. "Oh, Crimsonfur! Frozenstar's getting worse, she can't breath!"

Crimsonfur's eyes widened and she crouched down next to her leader. "Frozenstar?" She murmured, watching as the grey old she cat writhed in her nest. "Frozenstar calm down."

"There's nothing I can do, the herbs are not doing anything!" Wishberry shook her head in despair. "I think this is it."

Crimsonfur forced down a shiver of joy. It was time for her to become Flameclan's leader. It was time to make Lightclan suffer for what they had done. Too many Flameclan deathes had been caused by those fox-hearts!

A choked gasp escaped Frozenstar's lips and she stared up at Crimsonfur, her ice blue eyes wide. The deputy swallowed thickly, watching intently as her leader took her final breath before falling limp. Her blue eyes continued to stare directly at her, but they had turned dull and glazed with death.

---

The way to the StarCave was tiring, and Crimsonfur nearly collapsed on the ground by the time Wishberry announced their arrival at the sacred cave.

The moon was nearly at its peak. Crimsonfur was about to get her nine lives. Despite her exhaustion, she found the energy for a shiver of excitement to run through her body. *This is it.* She smiled at the gaping, black mouth of the cave. In its depths lay the pond that she would lay next to to receive her new status.

"Come, it is time." The calico she cat mewed, waving her tail for Crimsonfur to enter first. The red she cat straightened her stance and eagerly stepped into the choking darkness. Oddly enough, it was hard to breath in the pitch black cave; as if the darkness was stealing all the air from her lungs.

It wasn't long before Crimsonfur stopped at the edge of the glowing pond. The water was lit up, casting reflections that danced gracefully across the roof and walls of the cave. The echoing sound of water dripping from the cracks in the roof seemed calming. The entire cave was like something from the stories elders used to tell her when she was a kit. *But this is the real thing.*

"Welcome to the StarCave." Wishberry purred, smiling at Crimsonfur. "Are you ready to become Flameclan's leader?"

"Well, it's a bit late to go back now." Crimsonfur let out a small giggle- a foreign feeling of happiness swelling within her.

Wishberry gently rested her thin tail over Crimsonfur's shoulder. "Your parents will be proud of you." The tip of her tail brushed over the scars that were left from her lost wings. "You are a strong warrior, and the rightful leader of this clan. As medicine cat of the clan, I will be your closest ally- if anything is troubling you, come to me and I will help."

Crimsonfur nodded faintly, feeling uneasy with the sudden kindness the medicine cat was giving her. Inching away from the calico she cat- and breathing a silent sigh of relief as her tail left her wing scars- the future Flameclan leader meowed. "I'm ready for my nine lives." Her voice was filled with a strange new confidence she never noticed she had possessed.

"Then drink from the pool, and Starclan will come to you." Wishberry sat down by the water's edge, lapping at the glowing liquid.

Crimsonfur followed the medicine cat's lead, and carefully drank some water. The liquid seemed to burn her as it slid down her throat, and she narrowed her eyes. *Is that normal?* She wondered, confused. She could feel the water as it made its way sluggishly to

her stomach, stinging her insides.

Glancing at Wishberry for assistance, she found her medicine cat was already gone, her eyes closed peacefully. Crimsonfur nibbled on her tongue as the mysterious water continued to burn up inside of her.

Finally, sleep took her.

---

When she awoke in her dreams, Glitch was standing before her. The white she cat's eyes were narrowed as she peered down at the red she cat. "Crimsonfur. What a surprise."

Crimsonfur snapped to her paws. "I'm not in Starclan?" She looked around, only Glitch stood before her.

"Starclan must've denied you." The scarred she cat murmured, her white glowing eyes studying Crimsonfur closely. "I wonder why."

"How could they deny me?" Crimsonfur hissed. "I was deputy, I am the rightful Flameclan leader!" She bared her teeth in anger. "Why do they have to be so stupid?! Now how am I going to get my nine lives?"

Glitch sighed and lowered her head to brush her masked muzzle against the top of the red she cat's head. "You don't need nine lives. All you need is the name, Crimsonstar." She leaned back, her eyes creased in slight reassurance. "Besides, if you ever get hurt, Spark can heal you. Although she can't exactly raise the dead, so we'd have to act fast if you get in a sticky situation."

The new Flameclan leader nodded, raising her head a bit higher to look up at the white she cat. "I'll be the best leader they've ever seen, even without nine lives." She vowed, her voice deadly serious. She didn't need nine lives to be a good leader for her clan. "Starclan will regret their choices. Lightclan will get the suffering they deserve. My family's deathes will be avenged."

"All you need now, are the shadows." Glitch murmured, looking down at the black whisps that swarmed around her paws. "But not

yet. Not yet."

---

Waking with a start, Crimsonstar lifted her head to see Wishberry was sitting calmly beside her, watching her intently. Upon noticing the red she cat's consciousness, the medicine cat stood up.

"Crimsonfur, you have some explaining to do." The calico she cat muttered, her amber eyes narrowed in irritation.

"It's Crimsonstar now." The red she cat muttered, looking up at her medicine cat as she rose to her paws.

"You weren't at the nine lives ceremony. Starclan told me you were not allowed into there territory." Wishberry hissed, glaring down at her. "What have you done to upset them?"

"I didn't do anything wrong." Crimsonstar insisted. "If they're upset about the Dark Forest then-"

"The Dark Forest?!" Wishberry gasped, her eyes widening. "You go to the Dark Forest?!"

"Is that an issue?"

"That is an evil place!" The medicine cat snarled, shaking her head. "You're a traitor to us, Crimsonfur."

"It's Crimsonstar!" She hissed in response, her thick red tail lashing in growing anger. "And Starclan seems more evil than the Dark Forest to me. They took my family from me, watching happily as Lightclan murdered innocent cats! They stood back and let Pebblepaw and his brothers bully me to near death!"

"It isn't Starclan's job to control our lives! All they do is guide us." Wishberry growled, pacing around Crimsonstar. "I will not accept you as Flameclan's leader. Nobody will. If Starclan does not deem you worthy, then we will find another cat who is."

Crimsonstar bared her teeth, her ears flattening as Wishberry made her way to the exit of the StarCave. "Get back here!" She snarled,

unsheathing her claws.

"No!" The calico hissed back, stalking further away.

*I'm going to kill her!* Crimsonstar let out a fierce growl and lunged for the medicine cat. Wishberry had no time to react as the red she cat landed on her back, forcing her to the ground. In one swift movement, Crimsonstar had the calico she cat's throat in her claws. Blood sprayed across the sacred ground of the StarCave, staining the pelts of both she cats. Wishberry let out a strangled gasp of horror, already growing weak as her torn throat bled heavily onto the ground.

As she took her last breath, Flameclan's medicine cat utter two last words.

"You.. m-mur-murderer.."

---

After disposing Wishberry's bloody body into a river- letting it drift peacefully away towards twolegplace- and giving her own pelt a thorough wash, Crimsonstar began the trek back to her territory.

Nobody would know that she hadn't received Starclan's blessing of nine lives. They would welcome her as the rightful Flameclan leader. She would not be questioned by anyone. Whoever did would die, kin or not.

Although Wishberry's blood had been washed away into the depths of the river, Crimsonstar felt different. She felt lighter, more alive than ever before. Getting rid of the problematic medicine cat was the right thing to do. She could feel it. So what if the Warrior Code forbade murder, it was out of defence.

"Yeah, defence." She murmured softly, almost to reassure herself. She didn't like the thought of killing, but it was strangely uplifting.

Thinking back, Crimsonstar remembered how she had felt when she left Pebblepaw to die. How happy she had been when Pigeonfeather and Thunderfoot had been exiled. Death or banishment was the only way to eradicate her enemies.

There was no other way.

---

Camp was buzzing with cats when Crimsonstar arrived. It was past sunhigh. The clan was eagerly waiting for her.

When she was spotted, the cats quickly swarmed her. "Did you get your name? Your nine lives?" Ashwhisper demanded.

"Who's going to be your deputy?" Spikepaw asked, bouncing around her paws.

"Where's Wishberry?"

The last question made Crimsonstar perk her ears and push through the crowd. The red she cat made her way ontop of the meeting rock. The clan was already gathered, so there was no need to call for them. She swallowed before clearing her throat and meowing. "I have three announcements to make, but first let me say that I have received my nine lives and name."

Her words were met with cheers, and her heart soared, warmth filling her. As the cheers calmed, she started speaking again. "But on a more unfortunate note... Wishberry is gone. On the way back, she fell into the river and was swept into the rapids. I couldn't reach her in time. I can only assume her death was swift and painless. She will be missed."

The clan bowed their heads in sorrow, murmuring to one another. Crimsonstar's lie had easily fooled everyone. One problem was that Wishberry's apprentice, Wasppaw, was too young to take one the full medicine cat duties. She looked at the golden tom to see he was staring at the ground in terror, his eyes wide and his tail lashing as he panicked. *Hm, he'll find a way eventually.* Crimsonstar thought, dismissing the problem silently.

"Secondly," the red furred she cat interrupted the sorrowful meows, "I would like to appoint my new deputy." Crimsonstar looked down at her gathered clan mates, her amber gaze trailing over the few cats she deemed worthy of being deputy. "The new Flameclan

deputy shall be Bouncefoot."

Her brother let out a loud yowl of joy, snapping to his paws. "Yeah!!" He grinned, bouncing to the foot of the rock. "Here comes Bouncefoot!" He flapped his wings, hovering in the air for a few heartbeats before dropping onto the ground lightly.

The clan cheered for Bouncefoot, but Crimsonstar spied Falconheart watching on with a stone cold face, not saying a word. His blue eyes gleamed with jealousy. The red she cat held back a snort. *Mouse-brain.*

Once the cheers died down, Crimsonstar began her third and final announcement. "And finally, I have decided it is time to make Lightclan realise we aren't just a bunch of soft moorland cats. We are strong, and we will not back down from a fight! Tonight we will ambush their camp!"

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# Chapter 41

The weak leaf-bare sunlight dipped behind the hills as the Flameclan battle patrol trotted out of camp. The air around them was chilly, and without the warmth provided by the sun, the warriors quickly grew cold. Crimsonstar led the patrol, her amber eyes narrowed to slits as she spied the treetops of Lightclan's lush forest territory beyond. *Soon that territory will be stained with their murderous blood.*

She could hear the pounding of pawsteps behind her, their breathes short and fast as they hurried through their territory. Crimsonstar glanced back at the patrol. Behind her trotted Falconheart and Bouncefoot with Spikepaw and Brightpaw following behind them. Then it was Ashwhisper, Cindernose, Dustfur, Echofeather, Embergaze, Burningfire, Honeytail and Stoneclaw. They were a strong patrol. They were going to win the battle. Lightclan would fall.

Flameclan made it to Lightclan's territory, thundering over the border without a falter in their step. Crimsonstar kept one eye open for Lightclan patrols who might see their approach and warn their clan. *We must retain the element of surprise. We need to strike hard, killing some cats if necessary.*

As the patrol pounded closer to Lightclan's camp, Crimsonstar felt a shiver of excitement run down her spine. *Finally I am in control, nobody will stop me. I am clan leader! Not even Falconheart can tell me what to do!* She prayed her reign lasted for a long time. She didn't want to lose it anytime soon. And without her nine lives, she was put at a disadvantage compared to the other clan leaders. *But I don't need nine lives.* She quickly reminded herself. *I am strong!*

Lightclan's camp came into view and Crimsonstar grinned widely as the patrol continued to stream towards their target. "Attack!" She yowled at her clan mates. "Make them pay!" The patrol let out battle cries in response, bursting through the Lightclan camp entrance.

They were met with an almost empty clearing. Some warriors who were sunning themselves let out shrieks of horror, leaping to their paws as Flameclan poured into their camp. Crimsonstar easily spotted Greenpaw and Wildpaw poking their heads out of the warriors den and made a beeline for them.

*By now they'll be warriors, but I will still beat them!* She bared her teeth and charged at the two with a yowl of rage.

Greenpaw yelped and darted sideways to dodge her attack and Wildpaw slunk the other way. Crimsonstar hissed and spun around to try again but Greenpaw was on her back in an instant, her claws digging into her shoulders. Crimsonstar flattened her ears. Greenpaw was bigger than her, and so was Wildpaw. She could let them get the upper-paw.

"Greenstare, go for her neck!" Wildpaw hissed as he grabbed Crimsonstar's hind legs and dragged her onto her stomach. The red she cat growled and slithered out of the two warriors' grips, using her small size to slip away from them and out of the den. She couldn't take both of them at once. She needed help.

Staring at the Lightclan clearing, she saw her clan mates fighting fiercely against the enemy warriors. They were outnumbered, but Bouncefoot and Falconheart evened out the fight dramatically.

Creamstar yowled from where she stood at her den entrance. "Crimsonfur what is the meaning of this?!" The Lightclan leader yowled, her eyes wide as she stared at the raging battle.

"It's Crimsonstar now!" The red she cat snarled, stalking right up to the bigger she cat. "And I'm here to make your clan pay for murdering innocent cats!" She lunged for the light furred she cat, taking her by surprise. Her claws scored across Creamstar's muzzle, drawing blood. The Lightclan leader snarled and shook her head, blood splattering on the ground. She lunged for Crimsonstar, her teeth bared.

"You immature little kit! Your clan cannot beat us! You will lose!" Creamstar swiped her claws across Crimsonstar's chest and the red she cat gasped, darting to the side. She clawed at the she cat's

cream coloured fur, and she drew away to see she didn't cut the skin, only fur stuck to her claws. *Mouse-dung!*

Creamstar growled and lunged for her, knocking the smaller she cat down. "I should take all your lives away for this! Starclan will not allow you to win this fight!"

Fear quickly settled within Crimsonstar and she kicked at Creamstar, successfully dislodging the pale she cat so she could escape. The red she cat pelted away from Lightclan's leader, her tail lashing angrily. *I can't fight anyone! I'm too small!* Even with Glitch's added assistance, she still lacked heavily in her fighting skills.

Crimsonstar spotted Bouncefoot fighting against Stonefeather, her brother easily knocking down the Lightclan deputy. A small grin found its way onto Crimsonstar's lips as she watched the black and red tom tear the deputy's throat open, blood spraying all around them. *We will win.* She smirked as she watched the Lightclan deputy die from where she sat at the edge of the battle. *My clan will be victorious against these traitors.*

There was a snarl beside her and a grey tom lunged for her, his green eyes blazing with rage. She gasped and stumbled backwards, her forepaws rising to meet the large tom. Just as his claws met her fur, Falconheart slammed into his side and sent him tumbling onto the ground. In one swift movement, the black and blue tom had the grey warrior pinned down, his teeth sinking deep into his throat.

Crimsonstar straightened up again, her tail lashing in annoyance. She didn't care that Falconheart had saved her life. Now he would just use it against her to make her feel grateful to him. *If he thinks this will solve our problem, he is mistaken.* She growled, flattening her ears. *And I could've gotten that tom anyway, I'm not that weak!*

Falconheart stood back from the dead tom, looking sideways at Crimsonstar. His face revealed nothing, his blue eyes cold. "I hope all this death and killing is worth it." Then he spread his wings and flew up into the air to dive down on his next opponent.

Crimsonstar bared her teeth in annoyance and looked around the bloodied clearing. She saw the dead bodies of both cats from her

clan and cats of Lightclan. This was a vicious battle, one that Starclan wouldn't normally allow. But they were still fighting and the moon shone down on them, unwavering. *They may not approve of my leadership, but they aren't doing anything to stop me.* She grinned up at the sky. "Oh Starclan, what a mistake you have made."

She spotted Adderclaw, Greenstare's mother, lunging to attack. Crimsonstar growled and turned to meet her. The older she cat pinned her down but the red she cat kicked relentlessly until she was forced to let go. A new strength flowed through her body, and she bared her teeth at Adderclaw.

"Do as I say and you will beat her." Glitch's voice rumbled in Crimsonstar's head. She gasped, but quickly nodded her head, ready to listen. "I've given you my strength, you can kill her easily as long as you follow my lead."

Crimsonstar grinned as Adderclaw lunged, ready to take the bigger she cat on.

"Duck and attack her side!"

Crimsonstar followed her mentor's lead, grinning at the move worked and her claws easily sliced through the she cat's skin.

"Knock her down!"

"Go for her neck!"

Crimsonstar did as Glitch instructed and soon Adderclaw was laying limp and lifeless below her, blood pooling around them.

She was interrupted by a screech, and she spun around to see Greenstare lunging for her. "You pile of murderous fox-dung! You killed my mother!"

"Hypocrite! What about my sister and friend, you fox-dung!" Crimsonstar snarled.

"That's different." Greenstare sneered, "They don't really matter." She dove for Crimsonstar with a furious screech.

Crimsonstar ducked down, letting the white she cat sail over her head, then she surged upwards and slammed her paws into the warrior's side. She hissed, pinning down Greenstare on her back.

The Lightclan warrior glared up at Crimsonstar, her acid green eyes a fiery inferno of resentment. Her gaze turned to the bodies of Stonefeather and the grey tom. "You're crazy!" She spat, turning back to Crimsonstar and kicking her viciously with her hind legs.

Crimsonstar was winded from the blow and choked out. "I'm going to kill you!" She unsheathed her claws and tried to sink them into her neck but Greenstare dug her hind claws deep into her belly, tearing through her skin. The red she cat staggered backwards, blood pouring from her latest wound. She bit back a squeal of pain as she struggled to stand, her amber eyes fixed and glaring at Greenstare.

Glitch's presence had gone. She was alone for this battle.

The white she cat smirked triumphantly and stood up, beginning to circle around Crimsonstar. "Oh, you poor little thing. I can't believe you're deputy, you're so *weak!"*

"I'm the new leader." Crimsonstar snarled, her tail lashing. "Believe it or not."

Greenstare wasn't surprised- or she concealed it well- and simply bared her teeth. "Flameclan have lost their minds, letting a kit like you lead them!" She continued to circle her enemy, grinning widely as Crimsonstar dropped to her knees from the blood loss.

Crimsonstar stared up at Greenstare. "Are you going to kill me?" She asked, hissing.

"I'm thinking about it." She replied, smirking at her fallen opponent. "Starclan must've lost it, giving nine lives to you. You're undeserving of your place. You need to be destroyed."

Crimsonstar looked down at her paws, her gaze blurring. She hoped someone would come and help her soon. She couldn't die like this. She had to live longer. She had to finish making Lightclan pay. She

wouldn't let them continue to murder innocent cats.

Her prayers were answered by Bouncefoot, her brother flying to her rescue with a yowl. He slammed Greenstare onto the ground, the claws on his wings digging into either side of her head. Greenstare cried out in pain and kicked at the larger tom, her green eyes wide.

Crimsonstar raised her head and watched, her lips twisted into a sick grin. She forgot altogether about her injury, her entire focus turning to the upcoming suffering of her enemy. "Give her what she deserves for killing Flarepaw." She ordered her deputy. "I want to hear her screams as you kill her."

Bouncefoot seemed reluctant at first, but he seemed to be able to motivate himself in heartbeats, his claws quickly working their way into Greenstare's belly. Crimsonstar watched every heartbeat of the white she cat's suffering, her amber eyes gleaming joyfully. Her brother quickly made his way to her ears, digging his teeth into them and tearing roughly at the skin. Greenstare yowled in pain, the satisfying sound of her blood splattering on the ground.

Suddenly the ordeal was cut off as Wildpaw pounced on Bouncefoot. The distraction let Greenstare escape, and Crimsonstar snarled in annoyance. The red she cat snapped to her paws but fell back down a heartbeat later, dizzy and disoriented by her deep stomach injury. Bouncefoot shook Wildpaw off and ran to Crimsonstar's side, helping her up. "We need to get you away from the battle." He murmured, leading her out of Lightclan's camp.

Crimsonstar growled and resisted against her brother. "I have to see Lightclan's destruction!"

"Destruction?" He paused. "What do you mean?"

"They have to die!" Crimsonstar spat. "I cannot let them live! We will destroy Lightclan!"

Bouncefoot looked at her warily. "Crimsonstar.. Calm down.."

"NO!" Crimsonstar snarled. "Lightclan will fall! Take me back there! I want to see!" Her voice rose to a high-pitched squeal, much like a

kit.

Her brother shook his head stubbornly. "I'm calling off the attack." He let her fall onto her side, padding back into the bloody clearing.

Crimsonstar wailed after him, her eyes wide. "No! Bouncefoot get back here! Don't do this! They must pay!" She fell into a series of shuddering sobs, her whole body trembling with countless emotions and thoughts. Soon, her body decided she'd had enough and she blacked out just as Bouncefoot's words rang around her.

"Flameclan retreat!"

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# A New Book

I have created a new book.

*Lightclan Crack Ships*

:3

# Chapter 42

She snapped awake to the sensation of somebody poking her with their nose. Her amber eyes flew open to see Bouncefoot's dark red eyes staring at her, barely a whisker-length away.

She lifted her head, leaning away from her brother to see he was laying next to her, his red scaly wings spread out lazily on either side of him. "How long have I been asleep?" The red she cat demanded, shaking her head to clear the remnants of tiredness from her weary body. She glanced down, seeing cobwebs were wrapped on all her wounds. They didn't hurt anymore, that was good.

"Not that long. It's just coming onto dawn right now." The deputy replied, his paws kneading the ground. "The clan is restless, I've tried my best to calm them but they need their leader to say something. Most warriors haven't gotten a wink of sleep after returning from the battle last night, they were too worked up about the fight."

Crimsonstar sighed and rose to her paws, her limbs wobbling as she stretched briefly. Her joints ached and she flattened her ears. "Ugh, how did I get here?"

"I carried you." Bouncefoot replied, standing up as well. His large wings stretched high as he arched his back, yawning as he gave his whiskers a brief clean with a red paw.

"Only you carried me?" She asked, taking a few steps toward the den exit.

"You're tiny, Crimson, carrying you was easy." Bouncefoot chuckled, following her out.

*Wow thanks for reminding me.* The red she cat sighed and emerged from her den. Immediately after she did, she saw her clan mates all look up at her. The warriors who were laying half-asleep by their den pricked their ears and stood up. Soon all of Flameclan was

gathered before Crimsonstar, their gazes fixed expectantly on her.

For a moment, Crimsonstar was at a loss for words. She didn't know what to say. Eventually, she started talking. "Cats of Flameclan, I am proud of you all. We let Lightclan have a taste of our wrath, now they should think twice before challenging us." Her words seemed to give her clan mates relief and she watched silently, marvelling at how such simple words were admired by her clan now that she was their leader. She never wanted to let go of her title. As leader, she was safe. Nobody could hurt her anymore.

The sound of thundering pawsteps ouside camp made Crimsonstar look towards the camp entrance, her eyes narrowing. "What in the name of Starclan..?" She muttered, her ears flattening as the thundering got louder. Her clan mates drew into a tighter group, all staring at the camp entrance in fear and curiosity.

Finally, the source of the noise was seen. Lightclan warriors poured through Flameclan's camp entrance, trampling through the delicate tunnel with battle cries and yowls. Flameclan immediately jumped into action, spreading out amongst the main clearing to protect the dens as Lightclan warriors gathered in the centre.

Crimsonstar spotted Creamstar at the head of the crowd and snarled. "What is the meaning of this?!"

"You ambushed us, now we ambush you." Creamstar hissed in reply before flicking her tail at her warriors. "Lightclan attack!"

Lightclan warriors lunged at the Flameclan cats with screeches. Crimsonstar watched in terror as her clan mates- still struggling to recover from the initial shock from the appearance of their enemies- were easily overpowered in their own camp. Bouncefoot and Falconheart charged at the Lightclan warriors, but they could only take on a few cats at a time.

Crimsonstar stared in horror, her body rigid from shock. She hadn't expected Lightclan to react so swiftly and violently. Both clans were still recovering from the battle that night, yet Creamstar immediately ordered a counter attack. *We can't fight them off!* Crimsonstar felt her body begin to move, and she took a few steps

back, her tail brushing against her den wall.

Creamstar glared at her from where she stood at the centre of the camp. "You're all cowards! You don't deserve to call yourselves a clan!" The pale she cat turned to her clan mates. "Give these murderers what they deserve!"

"No!" Bouncefoot screeched, lunging straight for Creamstar. His claws were unsheathed to their maximum length, his teeth bared and wings aimed for the Lightclan leader.

Creamstar hissed in surprise and rose to meet Bouncefoot, but the black and red tom easily overpowered her and pinned the pale furred she cat down. "You're the one who deserves to die!" Crimsonstar's brother spat at the leader. "Lightclan are the murderers! We're only reacting in this way to stop you!" His claws dug into Creamstar's throat, blood oozing around his paws as he tore viciously at the skin.

Bouncefoot was ripped off Creamstar by two Lightclan warriors, screeching in fury at the winged tom. "Get off her!" One tom snarled, digging his claws into Bouncefoot's haunches. Bouncefoot growled and whirled around to face the tom, but the second warrior wrapped all four paws around his head, using her body weight to drag his head downwards so that his muzzle brushed against the ground.

Stuck in the awkward position, Bouncefoot shook his head wildly to get free, but a third cat landed on his back and his forepaws buckled beneath the weight. He fell forwards with a gasp, the she cat leaping out of the way just as his body crashed onto the ground.

Close by, Falconheart was already pinned down on the ground by a gang of four she cats, their eyes glimmering with amusement as the black and blue tom relentlessly struggled.

Creamstar was limp on the ground, most likely losing a life. *Well done Bouncefoot.* Crimsonstar narrowed her eyes. *You might have bought us some time.*

Stepping closer to the battle, Crimsonstar growled. "Hurt one of my

warriors and you will be sorry!" She unsheathed her claws, flattening her ears to look as fearsome as possible. Unfortunately, her act was no believed for one heartbeat.

"Oh really?" The tom pinning Bouncefoot down snarled. "I doubt a tiny she cat like you can do anything to us. I'm surprised Starclan let you become leader."

She tried not to let her fear show before replying. "Oh yeah? Come up here and let's see how tiny I really am." As she spoke, an idea came to Crimsonstar. *Glitch!* She called silently for her Dark Forest mentor. *I need your power!* With Glitch's help, she could beat the tom and prove to Lightclan that she was a force to be reckoned with.

Glitch's presence was felt almost immediately, and the white she cat whispered. "I think it's time I gave you the shadows."

*Now?* Crimsonstar narrowed her eyes at the barely visible figure beside her.

"You've proven to be the one." She replied simply. "But just so you know.. Once I complete the transfer, I will die."

The Lightclan tom was making his way towards Crimsonstar, but he was slow. Somehow, time seemed to be moving extremely slowly, allowing the two she cats to speak.

Crimsonstar took a deep breath and murmured. "Do it."

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Searing pain erupted in Crimsonstar's paws, but was gone the instant it arrived. She barely had time to react to the pain, it was gone so quickly. When the agony left, a new found power flowed through her viens and she immediately felt more in control of herself than she ever had before. The feeling was amazing, and she craved more of it. She grinned, glancing sideways at Glitch to see the white she cat had disappeared.

For a second she forgot, but the memory was quick to come back to her. *Glitch is dead.* She blinked, staring at her paws. She hadn't fully

thought about it up until that point. She had basically just killed the only cat who had ever provided her help and comfort. *But now I have her power.*

Looking back up, Crimsonstar saw the Lightclan tom was standing right before her, his eyes narrowed. "Well then, show me what you've got!" He snarled, ears flattened.

Crimsonstar looked back at her paws. They were still buzzing with energy, but she couldn't see the iconic whisps of smoke anywhere. *Where are they?* She wondered. *Do I have to harvest them from scratch?*

"Okay, time's up!" The tom lunged for her with a growl.

Crimsonstar squeaked and lashed out at him, her claws scoring across his face. The shadows were nowhere to be seen. She had to get them herself by stealing souls. *I can get his soul!* She bared her teeth and clawed at the tom as he pinned her down on her back. He didn't budge, his claws digging painfully into her chest. "Let me go!" She snarled, her paws pushing relentlessly against him to try and kick him away.

To her surprise, the tom let out a sudden choked gasp and blood sprayed over her from his mouth. His eyes rolled to the back of his head and he collapsed on top of her, limp. Crimsonstar gasped and wriggled away from the dead Lightclan tom to see Falconheart standing over him, the dark furred tom's blue eyes narrowed in anger. "Nobody hurts my sister and gets away with it." He muttered under his breath. "Not anymore."

Crimsonstar stared at Falconheart for a few heartbeats before turning to see Creamstar had risen. The Lightclan leader was hissing and spitting at her, her ears back. "Leave before I kill you all! Flameclan is no more! You are banished from these territories forever!" Around her, Lightclan warriors swarmed the beaten Flameclan cats, herding them towards the camp exit.

Crimsonstar stared in horror. *No! She can't kick us out!* She shook her head, her tail lashing in rage. "You can't do this!"

"Actually I can." Creamstar snarled. "Now get out before I kill you!" She stalked closer to Crimsonstar threateningly.

A screech of fury sounded from behind Creamstar as Bouncefoot slammed into her, sending the she cat sprawling. Creamstar got up with a growl and turned to face the winged tom as he towered over her. He shoved her onto her back and uncoiled his wing.

The gleaming claw dug itself into Creamstar's chest, the she cat wailed in pain and blood spurted into her fur. Bouncefoot removed his wing with the sound of flesh tearing. His wing claw was impaling Creamstar's heart.

The cream she cat gasped and coughed up blood before toppling over, her eyes glazing over. Starclan could not heal this.

Bouncefoot was swiftly piled on and beaten into submission, he stumbled to Falconheart and limped out of the Flameclan camp.

Crimsonstar growled, but fear took over and she scrambled after her clan mates, leaving her camp for the last time.

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# Chapter 43: Final Chapter

It was their first night in exile.

Crimsonstar lay on the cold empty moorland, atop a tall hill that let her look over at her clan's former territory. They hadn't trekked very long; the clan was worn out, and they needed urgent rest.

Behind her, her clan slept in a dip in the ground, all huddled together against the cool night air. Crimsonstar glanced back at her clan mates. What were they going to do? Find a new territory? It was nearly the height of winter, it would be impossible to make it to a new potential territory without losing cats. Glancing back at Flameclan's abandoned moorland, she sighed. She couldn't leave. There was nothing out there for them to call a home.

Crimsonstar knew she was just making up excuses to herself to hide the fact that she was terrified. How could Lightclan do this to them? They all deserved to die for chasing them out like that. They were the murderers. Traitors to the warrior code. Yet Starclan still shone brightly over them.

If only Starclan was on her side, not Lightclan's. *And now Glitch is gone... There's nothing left for me in the Dark Forest.*

With a small grumble, Crimsonstar rose to her paws and turned away from their territory, looking back at her clan.

*We are all going to die anyway.* She tried to reassure herself. There was no way they would make it anywhere in these conditions. There was no hope. The only way to remain a pure clan of warriors, was to die right where they were. Under the watchful gaze of Starclan.

"Forgive me." Crimsonstar murmured as she made her way down into the dip, her amber eyes glinting eerily in the moonlight.

She stopped before Spikepaw's sleeping body, his face relaxed and

calm as he rested. She smiled sadly before resting a paw on his neck and digging her claws in, tearing quickly at the skin and flesh. Spikepaw's eyes flew open, and he let out a strangled gasp that was muffled by her thick red tail. "Shh, it's okay, I'll see you in Starclan." She nuzzled her apprentice, willing him to calm down.

Her attempt did not work, and Spikepaw's last moments were spent in pure terror, a thick pool of blood already forming. Crimsonstar frowned at the body. She'd have to work quickly before the rest of the clan woke up.

By the time she finished off the fourth cat, others were starting to wake up. She spied Bouncefoot lift his head from the shifting heap of warriors. Her brother stood up in a heartbeat, his nose twitching. "Is that blood I smell?" He demanded, staring at Crimsonstar.

"Please don't wake the clan!" Crimsonstar whispered at the black and red tom, her eyes wide. "I'm doing this for their own good!"

Bouncefoot finally caught sight of the four dead warriors she had killed and his eyes widened in horror. "Crimsonstar!" He yowled, alerting the rest of the clan. "What are you doing?!"

"No, stop! Don't wake them up!" Crimsonstar gasped, quickly turning to her next victim- Cindernose. The grey she cat was awake, her eyes wide as she spotted the blood pool. Crimsonstar pinned her down and dug her teeth into the she cat's throat. "Don't struggle!" She muttered through Cindernose's neck fur.

Within moments the clan was sent into a panic, some cats running away while others stayed to try and knock some sense into their leader. Bouncefoot and Falconheart tried to block the way as Crimsonstar advanced on Brightpaw. "Don't touch her!" Falconheart snarled, his ears flattened as he stood in front of his apprentice.

"Get out of the way!" Crimsonstar growled, pushing against her brother. He easily held her back, shoving her away. She hissed and glared at her brothers. "Can't you see this is the only way to ensure our survival?!"

"You're crazy!" Falconheart spat.

Bouncefoot stared at her. "Please don't do this, we can find another home!"

"No we can't!" Crimsonstar shook her head. "We're doomed! I'm only making our deaths quick!" She looked around to see most of the remaining cats had fled. Her plan had failed. Flameclan was no more.

Bouncefoot took a step closer to Crimsonstar. "Come with us, we can survive together as rogues."

She hissed and backed away. "I'm not staying down here for another moment."

Bouncefoot seemed confused, but he suddenly realised what she meant when she raised her claws to her own throat. "No!" He gasped, leaping to stop her, but she had already done it.

Pain pooled her body, blotting out all other feeling. Blood poured from her neck, coating her fur. Falconheart and Bouncefoot let out yowls of shock and leapt to help her as she fell on her side. "Crimsonstar!" Bouncefoot gasped, his eyes wide. "No! You can't leave us!"

"Join me then." Crimsonstar croaked, her breath coming out in gasps as she bled to death.

"Please don't die." Bouncefoot wailed, burying his muzzle in her fur, tears brimming in his eyes. "This wasn't supposed to happen!"

"I'm just giving the world what it wants." Crimsonstar murmured, her eyes closing. Everyone hated her, they wanted her dead. So, that was what she was giving them.

"Crimsonstar please.." Bouncefoot cried.

In her last few moments, Crimsonstar watched as Falconheart pushed Bouncefoot to his paws and urged the black and red tom away. The last thing she saw before the darkness sucked her in was her brothers flying away from her, up towards the mountains.

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As she expected, Crimsonstar did not make it to Starclan. She awoke in the Dark Forest. *This is it, I'm going to be here forever.* She sighed softly, looking around. The only other cats she knew was Spark, Moonclaw and Stolenwhisp. She didn't like any of them, but at least they were familiar faces.

She looked around, taking a few steps across the clearing she had appeared in. The Dark Forest was always eeerily quiet, but she was never alone. There were always cats watching. The Dark Forest was filled with cats. *Potential souls.* She blinked at the sudden realisation. She had Glitch's powers. She could steal souls and create the Shadows. *With these powers, I can finally stand up to the cats stronger than me.*

As she walked, she caught sight of a bright sparkle up ahead. Quickening her pace, Crimsonstar stopped before a borderline. On the Dark Forest side, it was dark and shadowy. But on the other side a lush, green and bright forest lay. "What is this place?" She wondered.

"It's Starclan." Came a murmur from the undergrowth before her. A pair of blue scaly wings appeared and the head of her father popped out from behind the bush. "Welcome, Crimsonstar, to the border between good and evil." He stepped fully out from behind the bush, his face showing no emotion as he gazed at his daughter.

Solarflare padded out after him, her face twisted into an angry scowl. "Murderer." She hissed under her breath.

Crimsonstar growled and flattened her ears. "You failed to raise me correctly."

"Nonsense." The old she cat replied, lashing her tail. "You were just too difficult."

"Enough." Obsidianpelt muttered, turning to face Crimsonstar. "Do you know where you are?"

"At the border.. you just said so."

"No. What side are you on?" He sighed.

"The Dark Forest side."

"Good or evil?"

"Neither."

Obsidianpelt shook his head. "You're such a mouse-brain. Starclan is good, the Dark Forest is evil and it is your home now."

"It's not evil, Starclan is." Crimsonstar growled. "You abandoned your clan to Lightclan's wrath."

"Starclan isn't as powerful as the stories say." Solarflare hissed. "We can't fly down and help everytime you encounter a problem."

"We faced exile because you were too lazy to do anything!" Crimsonstar snarled, her eyes narrowing in rage. "Starclan are all selfish fox-hearts!"

"You tried to murder your entire clan!" Solarflare stepped closer to Crimsonstar, glaring down at her kit.

Crimsonstar glared right back up at her mother, spitting. "I was doing the right thing for them!"

"Be quiet!" Obsidianpelt commanded, his forepaws stomping on the ground angrily.

Crimsonstar bared her teeth and glared up at both her parents. "You both deserve to die!"

"We already have!" Solarflare growled.

"Then it's going to happen again!" The red she cat launched herself over the border, immediately feeling the warmth of Starclan on her pelt. She crashed into Solarflare, pinning her mother down on her back. "You should have died with the rest of your stupid tribe!"

"Get off me!" Solarflare spat, kicking at her. Crimsonstar held on firmly, her hind legs holding down Solarflare while her forepaws made there way to her chest and head.

"It's time for you to disappear forever." Crimsonstar snarled, unsheathing her claws. Solarflare's eyes widened and her body jerked under her daughter's paws.

"N-no, what're you-" She was cut off suddenly, her body going still. She felt a rush of exhilaration as she saw the dark whisp of smoke rise from her mother's chest.

*I did it. My first shadow.* She stepped back, reaching out for the shadow. The moment her paw brushed against the whisp, she felt a shift within her. Her eyes started stinging painfully, and her paws buzzed and throbbed as the shadow wrapped itself around her paws.

She turned to her father to see a look of terror in his eyes. "Crimsonstar..." He mumbled, backing away as she stared at him.

"No." The red she cat murmured in reply. "My name is not Crimsonstar anymore. That is not who I am." She paused, relishing in the strange coldness her first shadow gave her. Her destiny was not to be Flameclan's leader, or a member of Starclan. Her future lay in the Dark Forest, where she could plan Lightclan's demise.

"From this moment on," she whispered, staring directly at her father, "I shall be seen as NoName."

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# Fall

**Now the main story is over, it is time for the extra, bonus parts :3**

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Strike's POV:

Thunder crashed around him, shaking his bones. Lightning lit up the sky, the dark- nearly black- clouds surrounding him. Strike tried to stay steady against the howling wind, but he was easily tossed around as if he were merely a piece of dust in the storm.

"Tyler!" He cried for his brother, his voice barely leaving his lips over the howling wind. Rain battered his worn body, his fur drenched and wings heavy. *Why did I lose him in this storm? I'm going to die!* Strike let out a screech as lightning sliced the air so close to him he felt the waves of heat radiating off it.

*I have to fly lower!* He folded his wings, gritting his teeth as he felt himself fall downwards through the clouds. He couldn't see a thing; he was completely blind in the raging storm. *I can't die now, we have to reach the mountains!*

The two brothers had spent moons flying endlessly to the mountains. They had given up their warrior names for the life of rogues, searching desperately for a good home. They knew that in the mountains- where their ancestors originated from- they would find sanctuary. But getting there was proving harder than they thought.

A strong tug of wind slapped into him, tossing him sideways in the air. He spiralled for a few moments, his red eyes wide in terror, but he swiftly steadied himself with a gasp, wincing as the rain whipped at his pelt.

"We should've waited for the storm to pass." He panted, looking

down to see the ground fast approaching. He spread his wings to slow his descent and flew clumsily through the rain, just skimming the tall grass below him. "We were fools to think we could make it through the storm... I just hope Tyler's OK." Strike stared at the surrounding area, searching for his brother's familiar blue wings. He saw nothing- the storm was too strong.

"Tyler!" He tried calling again, letting out a squeal of shock as his paw sudden hit a tall bush, catching in a tangle of twigs. He was thrown to a swift stop, crying out as his paw twisted painfully. Strike yanked his paw out of the bush, rising shakily to his paws on the muddy ground.

He could barely hear his own breathing over the storm and he took a few steps away from the bush in an attempt to find a clearing to safely fly away from. His pawsteps were heavy, sticking to the muddy ground with every step.

He looked up at the thick stormclouds overhear. He was completely alone.

He uncurled his wings from where they rested on his back, stretching them up above his head. With one single, powerful stroke Strike was in the air once again. His paw throbbed, and he was struggling to stay steady against the wind, but he was making his way out of the storm. He could see the light up ahead. *I'm going to make it.*

Unfortunately, the storm did not like the thought of Strike leaving so soon, and a bolt of lightning struck his wing, slicing right through it. The black and red tom let out a screech, free-falling to the ground. His whole body siezed up, burning from the lightning strike. He landed on the slick ground with a thud, his head snapping backwards from the impact. Strike let out a wail, panting and whimpering as he felt blood drip down his head, onto the muddy ground.

The rain lashed mercilessly at his stiff body, and Strike felt waves of dizziness settling in. "Tyler.." He mumbled, voice hoarse as blood dripped on the side of his mouth. "Crimson.." He looked at the clouds just as his eyes shut, never to open again.

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**>:3 Guess who's death is next?**

# Devour

**This part was written by @Breezestxr**

***Very very very gory, you have been warned D:**

_____

Tyler's P.O.V

Tyler shivered, the cold wind blew around him, he narrowed his eyes in concentration, he was flying around the mountains, trying to find a place to land, but he was getting tired and the cold was taking its toll.

Suddenly his wings stopped flapping, he let out a yowl of fear as he plummeted towards the cold rock of the mountainside. He crashed onto the hard rock, dazed and cold. He stumbled to his paws, blood dripping down his face and into his eyes.

Snow swirled around him, the harsh cold wind buffeting his face, making him close his eyes tightly, tears fell down his face, where they froze instantly, he was going to die here, Tyler the fearsome winged rouge defeated by the cold.

Strike's mysterious disappearance during the storm half a moon ago had driven him to push further into the mountains. It had been a reckless move, and he was regretting it.

A menacing snarl made him jump, he looked up, coming face to face with a white wolf. The black and blue tom let out a shriek of fear and stumbled to his paws. He could tell the wolf was smirking at her prey as it struggled away. His paws were numb and his breathing ragged, shallow and rapid.

He collapsed a few foxlengths from the wolf, he started to cry. This was the end.

The she-wolf sniffed him, bloodlust in her eyes, she was deciding

which part of him to start with. Tyler watched her for a few, agonising seconds.

Suddenly the wolf bit into his wing. He let out a screech of pain and thrashed about, new energy coming to his cold body. The wolf put her forepaws firmly on his body and tugged. Frostbite had weakened his limbs and the wing was torn away easily. Tyler screeched in agony, tears streaming down his face and freezing to his fur.

Blood spurted out of the joint where his wing used to be, bone could be seen sticking out. He felt sick. The wolf's jaws grabbed his tail, which was stirring snow with its slow flicking. "N-no!" Tyler yowled as the wolf tugged.

Tyler vomited as the wolf pulled his tail right of his body, the contents of his stomach dribbled down his chin and onto his chest, where it froze along side his tears. The sound of bones crunching could be heard as the wolf chewed on his tail.

"Just kill me." Tyler whimpered.

Tyler was numb, he couldn't feel his paws, they had succumb to the frostbite. The fur had fallen off and the skin beneath was black with decay. The wolf easily pulled them off, blood drenched the snow at Tyler's body.

Tyler was glad he couldn't feel it, he wished for death to hurry up and come for him, he closed his eyes and prayed for the end.

But the wolf didn't let him have it.

She nosed his eyes and started to tear at the skin of his underbelly. "Stop!" Tyler screeched wildly. Blood splattered across his fur as his skin was ripped away. The wolf poked her muzzle into his wound and sniffed around. All Tyler could do was watch.

Her jaws closed around Tyler's intestines and she started to pull. Tyler coughed up blood onto himself, where it made its home alongside vomit and tears. Blood trickled from his mouth and onto his chest.

The sickening crunching as the wolf pulled out more of his organs made him vomit again, nothing but blood and bile came out. Tyler's eyes glazed over as death finally started to take hold of him. The cold had kept death away long enough for him to feel everything that was done to him.

As his liver was tossed aside -landing next to his stomach- Tyler's breath ceased. He gave into the blackness and let death take him.

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# Reunion

**There's a few more extra parts to write on here xD This book is never-ending.**

_____

NoName's POV:

She settled into a nest she had put together that day, sighing as she looked around the dark trees around her. The Dark Forest was not for her. She didn't fit in with the power-hungry, evil warriors. But, she also did. She had tried to murder her clan, she had been the one to launch the initial attack on Lightclan.

*Lightclan.* She growled softly. One day, she'd find a way to get down there and destroy them for what they did to her and her clan.

She had been in the Dark Forest for what seemed like centuries. She couldn't tell how much time had passed, the sky was always dark. She hated every day- or night- of it. She found no friends, the only cats she saw scurried away from her with feral hisses, or tried to kill her. No familiar faces had been sighted. It was a bigger place than she had originally thought. Maybe it went on for infinite. Although she stuck close to the Starclan border, never daring to venture too far into the endless depths of the shadowy forest.

She looked up when there was a small mew before her. She spotted a ginger tom peeking through the bushes, his green eyes staring into her. "You've got the shadows..." He meowed, stepping out of the bush.

NoName didn't move, fixing her gaze on him. After taking her mother's soul, everything she saw had a white haze to it, and the atmosphere around her lit up from the glow of her eyes. After looking into a dark puddle of questionable water, NoName saw a pair of pure white orbs staring back at her. Her amber eyes were no more, gone forever. She didn't care, she much preferred her white

eyes.

"And... You don't seem to have that many.." The tom murmured, slowly stepping closer.

NoName rose to her paws to meet the tom as he drew closer, looking up at his broad face. "Don't come any closer, Dark Forest scum."

He smirked at her threat. "Aw, you think you can boss me around?"

NoName felt the two, tiny whisps of smoke tighten around her paws anxiously. She couldn't hurt anyone with her shadows, not yet. She needed more. Yet after so long, she still only had her parents' shadows.

"Got nothing to say?" He glanced down at her shadows, his eyes gleaming with a thirst for power.

The red she cat took a step back, her thick tail lashing. "You can't take my shadows."

"And who's stopping me?" He grinned, looking around. "There's nobody here. Your mentor is dead, she can't protect you anymore, kit."

NoName drew in a sharp breath and flattened her ears. Everywhere she went, cats always threw her down. The high she had experienced as Flameclan's leader had passed too briefly.

Looking up at the tom, she growled. "Leave me alone, you cannot take my shadows!"

The ginger tom laughed and unsheathed his claws, baring his teeth at her. "Just keep still for me, and it'll be over in seconds." He smirked, lunging for her.

NoName squealed and darted away, gasping as she felt the ground vibrate from the impact the tom had as he landed on the ground. He snarled and charged for her, but NoName managed to slip away each time by barely a whisker-length. "Stop!" She hissed, ducking down as he swiped for her head.

"I want your shadows! You can't stop me!" The tom finally caught her ear in his claws and tore threw her skin. NoName winced and stumbled away, lifting her claws to fight back. Her attempt to claw at him was an immediate fail; he knocked her down and pinned her on her back. "You're weak! You can't even fight back!"

NoName kicked at him with her hind legs. "It's not my fault I'm so small!" She cried, her forepaws lashing out at him.

"Your size is just an excuse for you to be lazy with your training! If you really wanted to be able to fight, you'd do it!" He growled harshly, knocking her forepaws aside. "Not only are you weak, but you're also slow. You're just a red ball of lazy fluff. I can't believe Glitch chose you as her apprentice."

NoName hissed, whimpering as the tom sank his claws into her skin. *Am I going to die again, right here?* She wondered, staring up at him as the terror slowly settled within her.

To her relief, there was a blurr of black and red and Bouncefoot attacked the tom with a snarl. He quickly slit the tom's neck, a low growl rumbling in his throat.

"Bouncefoot!" NoName gasped, darting for her brother. "You're here!"

Bouncefoot turned to his sister and enveloped her in his dark fur. "I go by Strike now." He meowed, nuzzling her forehead. He sighed. "Great Starclan, Crimson, I missed you."

"I'm NoName now." She murmured back. "And I missed you too."

"NoName?" He stepped back, chuckling at her. "Funny."

She rolled her eyes, turning to the ginger tom. *I could take his soul.* She grinned, stepping over to him. He attempted to escape, but the only movement was a feeble twitch of his blood-filled mouth. NoName smirked as she placed her paws on his head and chest, watching as his body jerked upwards and his soul appeared from his chest. She quickly captured the soul, smiling as she felt the new burst of power at her paws.

Strike was watching in awe. "Whoa. Is that why you have fancy eyes now?"

"Yep." She grinned, letting the three tiny whisps circle her forepaws. "My beautiful, nightmare-making shadows."

Strike blinked and reached forward, tenderly touching one of the shadows. He immediately leapt back with a screech, falling onto his side as one of the whisps attached itself onto his leg. "Ah! No!'" He cried out, writhing.

NoName blinked, waving her paw to order the shadow back to her. Strike panted and gasped as he was released from his vision. *It worked.* NoName slowly grinned. *I can give cats nightmares!*

"What *was* that?!" Strike shrieked.

"That was what my shadows can do." NoName grinned crazily. "And that's only three of them.. Imagine what ten could do!"

Strike blinked, still out of breath from the ordeal. "Remind me never to touch them again..."

"Where's Falconheart?" NoName asked, looking around.

"He should be somewhere around here.." Strike shrugged. "And his name is Tyler now."

NoName snorted. "Where'd he get that name from?"

"Where'd you get yours from?" Strike countered, chuckling.

"Hm." NoName rolled her eyes and glanced to one side, seeing the faint glow of the Starclan border ahead. "What if he's in Starclan?"

"He could be." Strike murmured. "But I doubt it. We were rogues for some time, Starclan wouldn't like that."

"Let's go see." NoName trotted toward the border, narrowing her eyes against the sharp, bright glow that Starclan emitted. She stopped just before her paws touched the border, looking over into Starclan territory.

Starclan's newest Lightclan arrival was padding close to the border, a dark furred tom following her. It was Skystar. NoName growled and flattened her ears. "The Lightclan leaders are dropping like flies, at this rate there will be nothing left for me to destroy once I've built up my army!"

Strike murmured. "Army?"

NoName ignored Strike, watching with a growl as the tom padded after the white and green she cat, his green eyes glued to the Dark Forest. His gaze met NoName's and she bared her teeth with a growl. He immediately looked away, meowing sonething at Skystar. The Starclan she cat glanced at the Dark Forest and caught NoName's gaze. The two she cats stared at each other for a bit. Skystar gave her a look of disgust- even though she had never seen NoName, she already expected her to be evil, just because she was on the Dark Forest side of the border. NoName hissed. "I'm going to kill her."

Strike followed her gaze to look at Skystar. "Why?"

"First, she's Moonclaw's kit. Her blood is tainted with that of a murderer. Second, she's from Lightclan." NoName continued to list reasons for her immediate hatred to Skystar, her blood boiling in her veins.

"What about the tom next to her?" Strike asked.

"Yeah, what about him?" NoName growled.

Strike shrugged, growing silent as he watched the two Starclan cats pad away from the borderline.

NoName sighed. "He's just another stupid Starclan cat."

Strike glanced at her, a sly grin on his lips. "Hm... More like a cute Starclan cat."

"Cute?" NoName hissed, giving her brother a glare. "What about him makes him cute?"

"Oh, c'mon sis, I know you agree with me." Strike grinned.

"You're mouse-brained." NoName muttered, stalking away from the border. "I have no interest in anyone."

"It's been ages, NoName! You have to get over Jaguarpaw!" Strike followed her.

"I am over him!" NoName snarled back. "I don't want to like anyone! I don't have the time!"

"What have you been doing this whole time in the Dark Forest?" Her brother poked her tail.

"Planning my revenge."

Strike muttered. "You're crazy."

"No, you're crazy."

---

# Corruption

**NoName's POV:**

"Where are we going?" A voice echoed through the forest, waking NoName from her sleep. She grumbled and looked up, pricking her ears when she saw the two Starclan cats from before. Skystar and her dark furred friend.

"What are they doing here?" She mumbled, standing up to take a closer look at the two.

"Hey, look over there!" Skystar pointed towards the thick mist, deeper into the forest.

The tom glanced at where she was pointing. "What?"

"Just look!"

NoName watched with an interested grin as Skystar pushed the tom over and started running back to Starclan, changing into a light grey tabby tom as she ran. There was only one cat with shape-shifting abilities.
"Clearlight!" Both NoName and the tom gasped aloud.

Clearlight let out a chuckle as he pranced over the border again. The tom leapt after him. "Get back here you little trickster!"

NoName grinned. "Oh what a perfect opportunity." She lifted a paw and pointed it at the tom as he ran. A whisp of her shadows attached itself to his leg and he collapsed with a cry.

---

"Let me go!" The tom hissed, batting at the prison den NoName had created for him.

"Nope." The red she cat smirked triumphantly. *My first prisoner. Oh what fun we'll have in breaking him.*

Strike peered through the intertwining vines used to keep the tom in. "What's your name?" He asked, his red eyes boring into him.

"Why do you want to know?" He hissed back, glaring at the winged tom.

"Why not?"

He huffed. "Dime."

NoName raised an eyebrow. "A rogue?"

"Yeah, so?"

"A rogue in Starclan?" She muttered. "Never thought I'd see the day." She eyed the dark furred tom though the vines, looking at his brown tipped tail and paws. The brown fur on his chest and muzzle. Then the rings of white and brown around his left eye. The white speckles in his fur, shimmering under the glow of NoName's eyes. Looking closer, she saw even darker stripes running down his back and legs. She finally came to a stop at his eyes to see a look of disgust in the leaf-green depths.

"Stop looking at me like that." Dime hissed. "Dark Forest scum."

NoName bared her teeth. "Careful what you say around me." She let a single whisp of her shadows slip through the vines and near Dime.

The tom growled and scrambled away. "Don't!" He hissed, his voice raised in a plea.

She let the shadow return to her paws. "Next time I won't be so merciful with you."

Dime bared his teeth, but kept silent.

---

Four days passed, and Dime was such a pain, NoName was actually thinking about killing him. His soul would do much more than he would while in his cage.

Dime was currently asleep in a nest he had created for himself with the dry moss and leaves used for the roof of his cage. His face was troubled, his tail flicking nervously as he dreamed. The daily shadow punishments were getting to him, NoName realised she probably didn't need to use her shadows anymore, as his mind created them by itself when he slept.

Strike appeared at her side just as Dime let out a whimper and curled tighter into himself. Strike sighed. "Why are we doing this?"

"Simply for the thrill."

Strike rolled his eyes. "We should let him go."

"It's only been a few days."

"Of constant mental torture."

"I just want to see what my shadows can do to a cat over long periods of time." NoName replied, glancing at Dime as the tom started to wake up.

"Ah, just in time." She purred, squeezing through the vines and stepping into the den- silently thanking her small size that let her enter and leave the cage with ease.

Dime opened his eyes and looked up at her, struggling to his paws. He swayed on his feet, still disoriented from sleep. "Stay away from me." He hissed, glaring at her.

"No." NoName grinned and let her shadows do the rest. Soon, Dime was back on the ground, shuddering and crying as he faced visions of his worst fears.

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"Wake up!" NoName kicked Dime harshly with a paw, her ears flat as he still didn't move.

At least half a moon had gone by since the dark furred tom's capture. No Starclan cat had crossed over to rescue him. *Guess they didn't care about him after all.*

Strike hovered at NoName's shoulder. "Just let him sleep, he's been having nightmares all night long. He'll be exhausted."

NoName shot her brother a glare. "Stop being so soft!" She snarled, turning back to give Dime another hard shove. His ears twitched. He was definitely alive, but in a very deep sleep.

Suddenly, Dime surged upwards and pinned NoName down. She gasped in surprise, her eyes widening in shock as the bigger tom rested his claws on her throat, his body weight easily keeping the struggling she cat down.

"Get off!" NoName growled. "Or I will use my shadows!"

Dime ignored her threat, uncontrolled chuckles leaving his lips as he got off her. "Ooh, it was so worth it. The look on your face was priceless."

NoName growled and snapped back to her paws, glaring up at him. "You're going to pay for this!"

"Mm, yeah, I know. Hit me with your best nightmare, miss only-three-shadows." Dime smirked gleefully as NoName let out a snarl of rage.

"Fine, if you don't want the shadows, then I'll get Strike to give you another beating!" She hissed back at him, her tail lashing.

"Oh please no, not Strike. He's so soft on me I'll probably fall asleep in his embrace!" Dime grinned at the black and red tom, who was staring at him with flattened ears.

NoName growled in frustration and unsheathed her claws, scoring them across his cheek. "Is that soft enough for you?"

Dime hissed in surprise, but the smirk quickly returned. "Aw, NoName, you finally built up enough courage to actually scratch me."

NoName gritted her teeth and snapped. "You mangy pile of fox-dung!" She stormed out of the den, Strike hurrying after her.

"Hey, maybe if you stop using Clan insults you might manage to offend me." His words were followed by a screech as NoName finally lost it with him and sent all three of her shadows his way.

---

Later that same day, NoName was asleep in her cave, growling to herself as she slept. Strike was somewhere else, hopefully guarding Dime.

There was sudden a low whisper in her ear. "Hey. Hey NoName. Wake up."

The red she cat flattened her ears and opened one eye, lighting up the dark cave. She came face-to-face with Dime, his green eyes staring into hers with amusement. "What are you doing here?!"

"Strike forgot to close up the little escape hole you used to leave my cage. Once he fell asleep on duty, I took it upon myself to find you and tell you that he let me escape." He grinned down at her.

She snapped to her paws. "I'm going to kill you!"

Dime rolled his eyes and pushed her over, pinning her on her back. His paws planted themselves on her forelegs, making them unable to move. Her shadows were useless without the movement of her paws. He had learnt too much in his time in the Dark Forest.

"Let me go!" She snarled, kicking furiously at him.

"Ah, but I think it would be a good idea to let you experience the same pain I have for the past half moon." Dime smirked down at her, his lips curling back to reveal his teeth.

NoName hissed and wriggled around. Luckily, one of her forelegs got loose and she managed to send her shadows into Dime's face.

He collapsed on top of her with a wail.

---

Only three days later, NoName returned to Dime's den to see him

awake and sitting calmly in his nest. "Hm, strange." She murmured.

Strike appeared at her side. "No signs of Starclan cats at the border."

"They really do hate him. Perhaps this could help us.." NoName looked at Dime. "Look over here." She snapped.

"What?" Dime hissed in reply.

"Are you ready to take revenge on Starclan for abandoning you to my wrath?" She asked, grinning as a slow smirk rose on his lips.

"Yes, NoName. I want Starclan to burn for their mistakes."

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**So.. That's the end of Awakening The Shadows...**

**MmM so many chapters.**

**So.. how was my first special edition book from the Lightclan series? Should I make more? About who?**

**Anyway, I want to say thank you to everyone for reading, voting and commenting on here. C:**